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The PLAYS of
FERENC MOLNÁR

With a foreword by
DAVID BELASCO

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STAGE DIRECTIONS

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"Receive them, then—the tribute that I owe!

SHAKESPEARE.

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MOLNÁR! Author, stage-director, dramatist, poet: Ferenc Molnár. To-day, whether at home in his own beloved Hungary, or here, in America, a name to conjure with. But I remember a time before it was so—a time when that name was the name of a stranger; when, here in our Western world, his work was untried and unknown. That was more than twenty years ago. My friend Harrison Grey Fiske had acquired the American rights to one of Molnár's earlier plays, "The Devil," and had arranged with me for its production in my theatre. It had been my privilege to read "The Devil" in manuscript and I had been strongly impressed by the singular, original faculty of this new author. It was brought out, for the first time in America, at the original Belasco, August 18, 1908, and it enjoyed a substantial measure of popular support.

From my first acquaintance with his writings I marked Molnár as a dramatist of original and fearless mind, whose work evinces lively contempt for hide-bound conventionality, quick apprehension alike of the humor and the pathos of human experience, keen sympathy with the wretched and miserable, extraordinary constructive faculty, unerring dramatic instinct and a satisfying, sinewy vitality of style.

It was natural that I should be eager to become personally associated with the work of a dramatist who thus powerfully impressed me—that I should desire to place his work before the American public under my own direction as well as in my theatre. It was not, however, until nearly six years later that an opportunity for me to do so presented itself. Then, early in 1914, there came to me the manuscript of a new play by Molnár, called "The Wolf," and, the moment I read it, I knew that I had found what I had been seeking. I selected the late Leo Ditrichstein to play the principal part and also to assist me in adapting the piece so as to render it altogether acceptable upon our stage. The necessary revision was easily and quickly made; and on October 6, 1914, I had the honor of presenting it, under the name of "The Phantom Rival," at the present Belasco Theatre, where it achieved an immediate artistic as well as popular success and where it was acted for many months. The performances that were given in it by Ditrichstein (who, within his natural field, was one of the finest actors of his period) and Miss Laura Hope Crews, were models of histrionic art. That most authoritative and exigent of critics, the late William Winter, wrote about them: "... Of the kind, nothing so good as the acting of Miss Laura Hope Crews and Mr. Ditrichstein in the last scene of it has been known to our Stage for many years."

"The Phantom Rival" is a "dream play"—that is, a play in which the chief scene is made up of the figments of a dream in the sleeping mind of one of its central characters, visualized to the audience. Anything which

trenches upon the occult, the fantastic, the preternatural, the mysterious, has for me a dominant appeal; it holds me fascinated. Dreams, no doubt, are natural enough; but, also, they are mysterious, beyond comprehension. And so I reveled in the task of producing this play. The "visible dream" is an old device of the Theatre—but as difficult to deal with as it is old. I do not mean to boast; but recognition bestowed not only by the generous, indulgent public but also by experienced, exacting critics is the prized reward of the worker in the Theatre, and therefore I recall with pride Winter's comment on the difficulty of the task of directing and producing that play: ". . . Belasco's preservation of an unreal, dream-like atmosphere throughout the dream scenes of this play was perfect. . . ."

I like to believe (as certainly I do believe!) that the success achieved by "The Phantom Rival" laid the cornerstone of the great and constantly growing success of Molnár in America. In this volume will be found, besides "The Wolf" ("The Phantom Rival"), the ten other plays that have followed it to our stage: namely, "Carnival," "The Play's the Thing," "The Glass Slipper," "Fashions for Men," "Heavenly and Earthly Love," "The Swan," "The Guardsman," "Liliom," "Olympia," and "Mima." An imposing list, truly—and the remunerative popularity it denotes is richly deserved.

The rewards of successful play-writing, in this land and day, are prodigious. Popular approval in the Theatre, to use Johnson's phrase, means "the potentiality of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice." As a consequence, the field is overcrowded. Persons of very slender ability, who have, nevertheless, chanced to win the fickle fancy of the ever-desultory multitude, have, in a season or two, passed from pinching and obscure poverty to celebrity, affluence and ease. Their prosperity has been widely observed. The fact that in this, as in everything else, "the one succeeds, the many fail," is lost sight of, and, misled by golden dreams of fortune and fame, an army of scribblers toils at the abortive and pestiferous industry of inditing reams of dialogue and miscalling them dramas! The desire to acquire money cannot create the dramatic faculty. The dramatists, doubtless, requires to be cultivated—but like the poet he must first be born; he cannot be cultivated into existence! It is only from the natural-born dramatist that come the plays worth writing, worth producing, worth seeing. Such a dramatist is Ferenc Molnár, to-day the most interesting and significant of living dramatists.

DAVID BELASCO.

FERENC MOLNÁR

A Portrait

THERE are many sides to the art and personality of Ferenc Molnár. But his popularity rests most securely on his dramatic works—to which America has been singularly responsive—and the plays here collected reveal a range of qualities which cannot but appeal to theatregoers. Yet it may be of interest that the portrait so presented be rounded out by a biographical sketch of the noted Hungarian dramatist.

In the first place, despite his cynicism, Molnár is a sentimentalist. Add to this a remarkable skill in creating the unexpected, and a humor that amuses by its very subtlety, and you have a combination difficult to resist. Above all, there is in every Molnár play and narrative a deep undercurrent of pity and tenderness. There are no real villains among his characters, nor are they ever placed against a sordid background.

In the present volume, which embraces his representative plays written during the past quarter century (many of them published here for the first time), the reader will find ample evidence of Molnár's penetrating and sympathetic understanding of human beings: their virtues and vices, their joys and sorrows. One conclusion becomes inevitable—that, as seen by Molnár, people in general are motivated by universal forces, are held together by common bonds and torn asunder by kindred enmities. That these prosaic considerations are projected in an always delectable, brilliant and diverting manner merely proves the artistry of the man.

As for a portrait of Molnár, the man: The first meeting is likely to leave one with the impression that he has been disenchanted by things as they are; also, that he is aloof. But only the first of these impressions is warranted. For, although it is true that his plays are filled with humor and vivacity, Molnár is keenly aware of the ills of the world. Yet he never moralizes, contending that, life being all too brief, it is wisest to pluck what pleasures we may from adversity itself. He seldom lectures and is reticent in speech. But in his writings he speaks plainly, with understanding and compassion for the underdog.

A sparkling conversationalist and matchless raconteur, when in the mood he will readily discourse on almost any subject. His searing irony and sardonic wit often tilt unmercifully against friend and foe; but there always follows a climax of soothing tenderness, of remorse at having caused pain. His cynicism is usually directed at those who dare mistake mediocrity for talent. Primarily, even in his informal conversations, he aims to portray life as he sees it unfolding about him and, without the presumptuousness of a social crusader, to criticize it. Individuals and institutions alike are unspared by his lance, which, however, is dipped more often in pity than in gall.

Although somewhat of a recluse, Molnár can also be jovial. The intimate few who know him vow that he has few equals for sociability and as an entertainer whose rocket-like wit can keep a group of appreciative spirits convulsed with laughter. On such rare occasions, he is the true jester, even the clown.

Nor is it generally known that Molnár is an accomplished musician—a composer as well as a critic. He plays the piano, violin, 'cello, besides boasting a fine voice. He can improvise lyrics with equal facility in Hungarian, German and French. When among friends, he is likewise a matchless toastmaster; no one cares about food while he acts the *conferenciere*. He himself is a gourmet and takes great pride in personally preparing his pet Hungarian dishes for his foreign guests. And he sketches skillfully, too. He not only designs the settings of his plays, but also draws studies of the characters and tries to pick the players accordingly.

Max Reinhardt and others have paid tribute to Molnár's unusual directing ability. Some say he might have been just as distinguished a director as he is a playwright. In Budapest and in Vienna, sometimes even in Berlin, Molnár rehearses and directs his own plays, to which he also brings to bear an unusual mimetic talent. He has been known to enact every rôle in his own plays and to coach the casts with better results than the directors themselves. When foreign producers attend a Molnár première, they usually carry away with them not only the script but complete blueprints and instructions in the author's own hand. When in the midst of directing, Molnár lives entirely in the theatre. He sleeps and eats there, pals with the scene-shifters, and supervises every detail up to and including the dress rehearsal. He is fairly stage-drunk.

Molnár's method of playwriting is also different. He may bear the seed of a play in his mind for years, think out its every angle, then write it—usually in longhand—in two or three nights. His manuscripts are scarcely ever altered; he eschews everything that is superfluous. This economy of words is probably a natural result of his grasp of directing essentials. The Hungarian writing profession as a whole, particularly in the dramatic field, is deeply indebted to him, for, despite the handicap of an isolated tongue, and a scarcely known nationality, Molnár has been truly a trail-breaker in creating an interest abroad for what is now Hungary's chief export.

Aside from this absorption in his own plays, however, Molnár seldom visits the serious theatre, preferring operas and musical shows. One of his favorite pastimes is to sit up all night with friends, dazzling them with fascinating tales, true and invented, with epigrams, and with his always-individual philosophy.

Molnár has luminous, penetrating eyes, with a glint in them that conveys kindness and dignity. The large monocle he constantly wears is quite in harmony with the contour of a somewhat expansive face. Despite his fifty years, there are but few crow's feet to mar his smoothly-shaven countenance, and his mop of gray hair has a natural lustre such as men half his age might envy.

Fraternal feeling is not particularly strong among Hungarian authors. Thus Molnár's early career was considerably hampered by his own colleagues, who viewed his mounting popularity with alarm. Not until he was acclaimed abroad, notably in America, did his native contemporaries and official Hungary take him to their hearts. Since then, many an upstart has capitalized a mere acquaintanceship with him. And his attainment of international repute has undoubtedly opened the foreign gates to many other Hungarian writers.

In the days when his works were not yet widely known, he used to spend much time among his compatriots, sipping his favorite *shlivovitz*, a plum brandy of highly stimulating quality, and playing the Hungarian game called *alsós*, which is a sort of a stepsister to our own pinochle. While quite sympathetic to fresh trends in literature, he does not extend blanket approval. One often finds, in his short stories, this sly dig at certain absurdities: "or as the writer of so and so might say. . . ." But Molnár is tolerant enough to perpetrate a joke at his own expense. One of these dates back to the early days of "Liliom" in Hungary, where it had a cold reception. Yet having been produced by a repertory theatre, the play continued to appear at regular intervals. One night, the author attended one such performance with an American producer as his guest, to whom, after consulting the program, he said, "This is the hundredth time that 'Liliom' fails in Budapest."

It is said that Molnár has his proper share of eccentricities. He is, among other things, a fatalist, and attaches much importance to many seemingly harmless occurrences. Imagine what his reaction must have been to a program note at the American performance of his "Fashions for Men," which read, "Friends of the cast are requested to refrain from applauding during the progress of the play." That play was a box-office failure.

Terseness and trenchancy are among Molnár's characteristics. This is strikingly evident in his professional credo which reads:

"1. A good editor edits not his paper but his staff; 2. A good critic is like a good publisher—he not only pays decent wages for work performed, but also gives an advance on the poet's next effort; 3. Critical authority is at its highest when one looks for a mere *yes* or *no* from the critic; 4. In the appraisal of artistic endeavor, one may err on the side of leniency, but never toward censure; 5. To err gracefully is better than to guess the ugly truth; 6. Only man knows the agony of birth pangs; 7. A disciple has the right faithlessly to forsake his master, but the master must never abandon his disciple; 8. He who makes an art of encouraging others, becomes himself impervious to encouragement; 9. The fairest verdict may be expected from that judge who himself has inspired the accused to commit a misdeed; 10. Shakespeare was a genius, so let us merely strive to be honest."

This knack of condensation is further exemplified in the following thumb-nail autobiography: "1878, I was born in Budapest; 1896, I became a law student at Geneva; 1896, I became a journalist in Budapest; 1897, I wrote a short story; 1900, I wrote a novel; 1902, I became a playwright at home; 1908, I became a playwright abroad; 1914, I became a war correspondent;

1916, I became a playwright once more; 1918, my hair turned snow-white; 1925, I should like to be a law student at Geneva once more."

Unlike most authors of note, Molnár intends to write no memoirs, though many of his works—especially his novels—allow one glimpses of his childhood and adolescence. Concerning these periods he was once moved to amplify the foregoing thumb-nail sketch. He wrote:

"I was born on January 12th, 1878. This was followed by a five-year hiatus. Then, in quick succession, I attended various schools for sixteen years. Most of this time was spent at a parochial school and the least of it at the Royal College of Sciences whence, because of crowded space conditions, I withdrew to the Central Café in order to complete my legal training. I devoted an entire year to the study of criminal law and statistics, for I was ambitious to become an authority in those fields. In fact I wrote a disquisition on the two subjects which, in 1896, was published in the *Pesti Hirlap*. My first fictional stories and verses appeared in a humorous magazine called *Urambátyám*. Likewise in 1896, I suddenly swooped down upon the editorial sanctum of the *Pesti Hirlap* to announce my intentions of becoming a journalist. But the managing editor happened to be away hunting; and I waited for his return. Thus, it was only fourteen years later that I landed the job. Meanwhile I attached myself to the *Budapesti Napló* and the *Pesti Napló*. During this period, in spare moments, I perpetrated short stories, novels and even, indeed, plays.

"On my own initiative I launched, in 1892, a periodical entitled *Haladás* (*Progress*), which was written in longhand and appeared in four copies. Soon, however, this publication was supplanted by one known as *Eletképek* (*Panorama*), which I edited and lithographed in the provinces, occasionally attaining the magnificent circulation of twenty copies.

"My first major dramatic effort was a weird, spectacular play called 'A Kék Barlang' ('The Blue Cave'), which was successfully produced, in the early nineties, on a flimsy stage built (at a cost of eight whole guildens) within the basement home of a friend. I did the settings, too, while my chum contributed paper puppets of his own making. The première of this play, staged with the aid of all sorts of blue bottles filched from the surgery of my father, a physician, ended in a riot. In consequence of which, my next play had to languish for a decade thereafter, until the Comedy Theatre of Budapest saw fit to present it. This protracted pause may have left its baneful impress upon all my later dramatic efforts.

"In conclusion, I may add that, far from harboring ambitions of jurisprudence, I am now trying to achieve a literary career."

Curiously enough, Molnár's real career begins where this autobiography ends. He was eighteen when he began to write in earnest. He soon attained prominence as a journalist, but his first efforts published in book form attracted no particular attention. Two volumes "Magdalene" and "A Night of Kisses" (1900), went virtually unnoticed. But his novel, "The Hungry City," which appeared shortly after these, revealed him as a keen observer of the seamy side of Budapest. Equally well liked were his narrative writings which

followed: "A Derelict Boat" (novel, 1901), also published in English; "Józsi" (humoresques, 1902); "Eva" (novel, 1903), which appeared in English together with "A Derelict Boat"; "Prisoners" (novel, 1907), also published in English.

During this period his first dramatic works were likewise written and produced: "A Doktor Ur" ("The Lawyer," 1902) and "Józsi" (1904). The first of these is a hilarious farce in the French manner, in which the central character is a thief who, in order to help a lawyer friend make a name for himself, repeatedly commits burglaries. The figures are better drawn and more vivid than those of his Gallic contemporaries, and indications of originality in dramatic craftsmanship were also noted at the time.

Most of Molnár's earlier plays had their inception in impressionistic sketches and isolated scenes which were written with no thought of ever elaborating them into full-length dramatic works. These were, so to speak, the by-products of his journalistic years. "Liliom," for instance, was written in just such a manner while Molnár worked as a night reporter. Incidentally, in all of Magyar newspaperdom no one has approached Molnár's height, and even now he labels himself first and foremost a journalist, who "shall never be anything else." And he describes the profession: "Reporters in America and elsewhere go out and get the news, whereas we more often than not stay in the office or in our garrets and make the 'news'. By that I mean that we report the news of the mind and soul of our characters as much as we do the actions and happenings of daily life, which are, after all, the material accidents of existence rather than the significant realities of life. There is a disposition in some quarters to call all that fiction. But some of it, I insist, is literature. True literature is life translated into letters."

But whatever Molnár wrote as a reporter always had a dramatic framework and spirit. Then, as now, he strove to evaluate life in its relation to present-day problems.

"Józsi" was the first play to be fashioned from those gem-like sketches which made Molnár the columnist *par excellence*. In this work, a discerning projection of how unruly and pampered children often contribute to the unhappiness of their parents, Molnár proves himself a keen psychologist. He dissects the juvenile soul, and does it so amusingly that the casual onlooker or reader is apt to overlook the deeper implications of the play. Elsewhere Molnár says in all seriousness: "The most cruel humans are children," and in "Józsi," he treats of them with that in mind.

It was not, however, until he wrote "Az Ördög," widely known here as "The Devil," that Molnár appeared in the international limelight. It was first produced, in Hungary, in 1907, and was almost immediately translated into all the major languages. The English adaptation was made by no less a literary celebrity than Oliver Herford and, with the incomparable George Arliss in the title rôle, the play had a long run both here and in England. But, due to inadequate business arrangements, the author confided during his sojourn here, his American royalties were not enough to pay for cigarettes.

This, despite the fact that at one time four New York theatres (and several provincial stock companies) were presenting "The Devil" simultaneously.

It has been charged that Molnár helped himself to Goethe's "Faust" for the pivotal idea in "The Devil." But this is unfair. Molnár's Dr. Miller, unlike Mephisto, is not a scheming villain who lures the lovers to their doom. Molnár's protagonist is a glib, cynical, personal demon, conjured up by the collective subconsciousness of the people involved.

But the success of "The Devil" did not dazzle Molnár strongly enough for him to relinquish newspaper work. If anything, his column became more brilliant, his feuilletons and novelettes more unique. In 1908, official Hungary, which had theretofore begrudged him all honors, saw fit to make him a member of the discriminating Petöfi Society. Meanwhile he married and, although the marriage was the culmination of a romantic courtship of six years, incompatibility of temperaments led to an early parting. A daughter was born of this union, and it has been said that the central idea in "Liliom," which was Molnár's next play, was inspired from his brooding over this marital shipwreck.

"Liliom" was first presented in 1909. Its Hungarian and Austrian premières were virtually simultaneous, but America did not see it until more than a decade later. Here it had gone the rounds of nearly every reputable New York producer, several of whom had held options on it from time to time. Then along came the then infantile Theatre Guild and, with a gesture of boldness, announced "Liliom" for production at the tail end of the 1920 season. Preliminary curiosity ran high, the more so since the play had failed to satisfy Molnár's own audiences and severest critics in Budapest and Vienna; it was rumored that Molnár's star was on the wane, that "Liliom" marked the beginning of his eclipse.

But our critics unanimously hailed this fantasy as one of the rare events in theatredom. Here was a play that gripped the mind and the heart. The sheer humanity of it swept aside all critical carping, and its tender irony and wisdom struck a responsive note in every heart. "Liliom" is undoubtedly touched with the divine spark of genius. Blending fact and fancy with daring imagination, it is a play of many moods, which all dovetail into one another so perfectly that its structure and climactic effect are never marred. And if one looks for that philosophy of life inherent in a great work, one finds it not only throughout the play but in Liliom's dying words: "Nobody's right . . . but they all think they are. . . . A lot they know."

"Liliom" is a legend in which symbolism and reality are uncommonly combined; it has much in common with folklore, myth and fairy tale. It represents the tragedy of souls unable to fit themselves into a world of reality. Aside from what the play meant to Molnár in a realistic sense, he may also have sought to relive, symbolically, the days of his own baffling childhood. This same attempt may be found in dozens of his short sketches and dialogues and, to a great degree, in the novel, "The Paul Street Boys," recently published in English. The bewildering problems of childhood—especially in its world of make-believe—seem to fascinate Molnár to this day

no less than the perplexities of adults. He himself always preferred play to study, and he feels, as he put it, that "play cultivates and sharpens the childish imagination; the child usually pretends that it is something other than what it really is."

The American production of "Liliom," in any case, restored Molnár's faith in his ability as a dramatist of universal appeal. Its success here created an instantaneous interest in the play everywhere. Indeed, it prompted a revival in his own country which resulted in an overwhelming triumph for author and play.

Prose works by Molnár published at about the time "Liliom" was first produced are "Music" (short stories, 1908), "He and She" (feuilletons and sketches, 1909); "The Pipes of Pan" (anecdotes, yarns and feuilletons, 1911); "Three in One" (impressions, sketches and odd types, 1914). Of lasting importance, is his delightful "The Paul Street Boys" (1907), already mentioned, which probes in a masterly fashion the juvenile soul. Molnár also translated numerous French and German plays for metropolitan theatres. Some of these he did as reportorial assignments, yet his first drafts were flawless enough to be used for production purposes.

Next in chronological sequence on the dramatic roster is "A Testör," known here latterly as "The Guardsman" but produced in America even before "Liliom" as "Where Ignorance Is Bliss." Strange as it may now seem, that initial presentation was of no great consequence, having neither enhanced nor detracted from Molnár's reputation. But the Theatre Guild of New York once again came to the rescue. This time, in 1924, it placed Molnár at the head of the list. "The Guardsman" opened that season at the Garrick and immediately established itself as an outstanding hit. What in 1913 had been regarded as only a mildly interesting comedy, was now received with acclaim. "The Guardsman" is a delicate comedy of adult sophistication. In it a leading Shakespearean actor fancies that his wife, likewise an artist of the stage, is in a mood for a new romance with some one quite unlike any one she has ever met. A rather difficult problem for the lady, as she has had no less than half a dozen previous affairs. But this time the husband is resolved to have something to say about her latest attraction without really saying anything. The drollness and deft handling of the ensuing situations make for a highly polished, amusing comedy. It should be noted here, also, that a year prior to this second new success, another Molnár play, "The Swan," had won spontaneous critical approval. But of this more will be said in its proper place, "The Swan" having been written eight years after "The Guardsman."

By now, in his own country as also in other lands, Molnár came to be looked upon as one of the foremost playwrights of our day. George Bernard Shaw himself publicly praised "The Guardsman," expressing the belief that it would endure with the finest works of modern playwrighting.

Then two years elapsed before another play by Molnár saw the boards. This is entitled "A Farkas" and has had two different American presentations, first as "The Phantom Lover" and some years later as "The Tale of the

Wolf." The latter production, though staged with genuine skill and enacted by a competent cast, did not live up to expectations. More is the pity, as "The Tale of the Wolf," a dream play, has much in common with the theme of "The Guardsman." In fact, it and "The Guardsman" are complementary, the two plays attacking the same problem from different angles. Both plays, despite their suaveness and cloak of light-hearted comedy, bespeak emotional tempests which might easily have resulted in a melodramatic "problem play."

With the completion of these plays, Molnár decided to seek respite from such inspirational complexities as induced those rather grim comedies. His newspaper work continued unabated, and the first year of the World War found him traveling over the devastated battle-fields of the German-Austrian forces. Here he found in a correspondent's rôle his former wife, Marguerite Vészi. Both sent brilliant reports to the same daily, but Molnár's were by far the more vivid, colorful and the more human—so much so, that, though belonging to an enemy people, he had the unique distinction of having most of his war correspondence reprinted in leading Allied publications, including the London "Morning Post." In this country it was published in the New York "Times."

Gathered in a bulky volume, these daily chronicles form a document of real importance. "A War Correspondent's Diary" depicts human emotions as manifested not so much by the combatants as in persons and places most tragically affected by the horrors of war. The pathos and the humor of these pages are stirring. The diary bares Molnár's deep humanity, which is also evident in a story told of him. One day, while wandering about with a foraging party, he strayed into a ramshackle house. There he found, lying on the table, a brace of army pistols the butts of which were thickly scarred with all manner of patriotic sentiments, most of them glorifying war and damning the enemy. Believing himself unobserved, Molnár picked up one of the pistols and wrote in German, "Live and let Live!"

At about this time, what remnants of prejudice there still existed against him were wiped away by his being elected to membership in the Kisfaludy Society, which is the supreme literary authority in Hungary. That same year he also wrote a long novel, "Andor," which is the story of a youthful degenerate, set against the lurid night life of Budapest, in which psychoanalysis is adroitly and lucidly employed, without resorting to the sordid. Molnár regards this his finest literary effort.

Nor was this year entirely unproductive in the dramatic field. "Uridivat," played here under the title of "Fashions for Men," is of the 1914 vintage. This is somewhat reminiscent of Dostoievski's "The Idiot," but lacks the distinctiveness of Molnár's earlier works, and had but a short run. It tells of a poor, pure-hearted girl menaced by the attentions of a rather unscrupulous rake, a man of wealth and other irresistible qualities. Smiles and tears, pathos and merriment, are deftly mingled in a happy ending.

The war period also inspired the next Molnár play, "A Fehér-Felhő" or "The White Cloud." It is doubtful whether an American production of this haunting fantasy will ever be given. Herein Molnár again skillfully experi-

ments with psychology. "The White Cloud" is a miracle play devoted to a simple analysis of how legends are born and destroyed. It is also a subtle satire on the sham heroics of war and patriotism. The play, written in the provincial idiom, is peopled largely with children, and its dramatic effectiveness is heightened by the same sort of celestial scenery as is called for in "Liliom." "The White Cloud" was written at military headquarters.

Then, as if to relax from the tension of war, Molnár wrote the play "Farsang," known here as "Carnival." Although technically not sufficiently Molnáresque, there is in "Carnival" enough of sharp character etching and symbolism to rank it among his important efforts. In its realism the conflict between carnality and love is arrestingly portrayed. But symbolically it is but another attempt on the part of the author to point the way to human happiness.

After this, with disenchantment aggravated, Molnár wrote little else until after the Armistice. "A Hattyu" or "The Swan" was his first post-war play. Once more Molnár was at his best in as beguiling a comedy as has been seen in many years. "The Swan" is clever and merciless satire of royalty and the absurdities of vanishing Court life, blending a more than the usual amount of typically Molnárese wisdom and pathos, wistful romance and pure wit. In France, after the première of "The Swan," Molnár was decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honor.

With the fruits of "The Swan" bountifully reaped, Molnár's fancy turned again to subjective romance. His next play, "Egi és Földi Szerelm" ("Heavenly and Earthly Love"), was produced in Budapest less than a year after "The Swan." The theme of "Launzi" (as it was known here for a brief period, with Pauline Lord in the title rôle) deals, subtly and in a provocative manner, with the marital conflict between a mere prosaic wife and a being divinely endowed and capable of inspiring genius. This play, with its original title suggested by one of Titian's canvasses, was first outlined in one of Molnár's short dialogues, the moral of which was that both heavenly and earthly love may dwell in one and the same woman. "Launzi" is decidedly tragic and, in a way, calls to mind such well-known kindred figures as Hauptmann's Hannele, Ibsen's Hedwig and even Shakespeare's Ophelia.

Nineteen hundred and twenty was a vacation year for Molnár, and he was often seen frequenting, rather more gayly than is his wont, the leading strands of the Continent. Nevertheless, his balance-sheet for that season shows, aside from several fictional compilations, three one-act plays of distinctive merit. These bear the collective title of "Szinház" and appear in this book as "Theatre." They have not yet been produced outside of Hungary, but I recall with amusement how five or six years ago several theatrical managers here sought to be first to know their themes, and so quite a merry scramble developed. But, for some unexplained reason, all agreed that one-acters hold only artistic attraction. And that is deplorable, for in these plays Molnár is at his best as a keen observer and dramatic technician. Each of the three—"A Prologue to 'King Lear,'" "Marshal," and "The Violet"—presents a real slice

of life among the thespians, with Molnár's amazing knack for character portrayal and subtle irony gleaming through every scene.

"A Vörös Malom" ("The Red Mill"), an experimental realistic play dealing with the infernal regions, though indifferently received by certain hostile Magyar critics in 1924, was well received in both Berlin and Vienna.

The Hungarian première of "Mima" (as "The Red Mill" is called in its American production) was preceded by violent controversies between the admirers and disparagers of Molnár. For the first time in years, this war between the clans moved him to issue a statement that serves to reveal his sensitive nature. He averred that "the great public, by which I do not really mean the public but those ten thousand humans who constantly patronize the theatre and are thus closely related to the theatre, actors and author . . . they, I say, are inclined to suspect a self-seeking publicity stunt behind any announcement of a play. 'Aha!' they say, 'he has had himself boosted again.' As a matter of fact, to one who enjoys some measure of repute, publicity is most injurious. First of all because such publicity gives rise to false notions. Secondly, because it diminishes the value of the play, for public interest cannot help waning under the impact of sensational and constantly varying reports, while the play itself remains precisely as the author has written it. In other words, it does not develop nor rise in value commensurately with fluctuating public interest.

"No real playwright worthy the name can possibly relish the thought of having his play exhibited stark naked by everybody before the première, of having his every secret laid bare, his every garment removed. Every person craves to attend the première in a chaste frame of mind, and therefore preliminary publicity can benefit only the author who is as yet unknown. Don't think that this is merely a capricious defense put up by a playwright against public indiscretion. It is far more serious than that and calls for redress even by international copyright laws. My protest applies equally to the most sympathetic articles, which are bound to prejudice any audience—to whom the piece becomes so familiar, to its minutest charm and detail, that one can almost hear them reciting the text.

". . . Since, however, "The Red Mill" ("Mima") has dozens of players, whom I cannot possibly prevent from babbling about the play and whose conception of it is probably widely divergent, it is perhaps wise that I, the author, make public a statement prior to the première. . . . And so, after revealing that the play consists of a prologue lasting half an hour and a single act requiring two hours, with a total of twenty-nine lightning changes of scenery that is never repetitious, let me epitomize the play. Briefly, the Head Devil in Hades invents a machine, the Red Mill, into which may be cast a good man who, fifteen minutes later, emerges through a rear opening completely corrupted. For purposes of experimentation, my devils finally pick a recently married, sentimental young forester whose equally sentimental young bride constantly strives to make him happy with his pet dish—baked kraut and pork. The innocent fellow is then tossed between the millstones where he is ground up like wheat grains in a regular mill. Somewhat as life

grinds humanity. The machine itself is nothing more than a visible combination of our machine world and the psychological grind. It is, basically, a mere theatrical jest which now and then grows deadly serious, but, in the end, remains a jest after all. I do not aim to exaggerate the import of this slender theme, but to project a play that will perhaps induce a tear or two. Had I the courage to do so, I would call it a comedy."

So there you are; Molnár, as ever, intent not so much on amusing you as on moving you to tears.

If "The Red Mill" did no more in Hungary than to reveal the versatility and originality of Molnár, "Üvegcipő" (known here as "The Glass Slipper"), which followed, again brought to the fore Molnár the poet. In this tender comedy Molnár is beset by no harrowing problems. Instead, he yearns to be clownishly jolly, but is tempted to lapse into symbolic sentimentality. The story of the play concerns a suburban Cinderella, a little servant girl who goes to plays at the National Theatre in Budapest, and there becomes filled with romantic notions. She dreams and struggles in life for the fabled glass-slipper and Prince Charming, who turns out to be an ordinary elderly carpenter. The pathos of her love, with its shades and overtones of pity and understanding, does not, however, entirely supplant the usual humor and satire found in Molnár—as witness the courtroom scene. In fact, in its happy blending of these qualities, and in its excellent craftsmanship, "The Glass Slipper" does not fall far below "Liliom."

And now (in 1924) we come to "Játék a Kastélyban," which was presented here with the classic title of "The Play's the Thing." Justly so, as Molnár himself confesses to having gleaned his theme from "Hamlet." He relates how the thought of writing the play occurred to him, as follows:

"My wife (Lily Darvas) and I were stopping at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna. She was then learning to speak German. All day long she had to recite classical German plays. Just for practice, for hours on end. One afternoon an intimate friend called on me, and as we were chatting amiably, he suddenly jumped up. He had heard Lily's voice in her room, which adjoined mine, saying in fluent German, 'I love you, I love you! I shall die of love for you!' No wonder he jumped. And I jumped. Both of us went to the door and, upon opening it, found Lily quietly sitting in a rocker reciting declarations of love to her tutor. Utterly harmless, yet how disturbing it sounded! . . . That's how I got the idea. But you can just as well say that I got it from 'Hamlet,' from that familiar line, you know."

"The Play's the Thing" is a highly amusing caprice, suavely cynical and gayly sophisticated. In construction it departs from conventional devices, and the edge of its humor is sharper than ever, while the dramatic balance shows the handiwork of a perfect craftsman.

In 1925 Molnár wrote "Csendélet" ("Still Life"), which was produced that same year by the Comedy Theatre of Budapest.

"Riviera," to be produced next season in New York, was followed by "Olympia," Molnár's latest work, which one of the most discerning critics in Budapest has called a "mirage built on concrete" and in which Molnár's facil-

ity and urbanity are said to reach heights never before attained by him. In three swiftly moving acts, the adroit Hungarian presents a story dealing with royal manners of a quarter century ago. It is perhaps unfair, as Molnár says, to give too much of it away before the première or, in this case, before a first reading. In "Olympia," Molnár has again proved himself a playwright of extraordinary inventiveness, compassion and humanity.

There remains little else to record—unless it be noted that Molnár has a bulky diary in which he has garnered a lifetime's greatly varied observations. From this, he told the writer, he has been feeding, for more than a quarter century now, not only his plays but also those numerous other volumes which make up his huge non-dramatic output. There are, in all, approximately fifty volumes, with heaps of his best writings not yet crammed into paste-board covers.

His journalistic pen is still prolific, leading publications in Berlin, Budapest, Vienna, Rome and New York paying top rates for his causeries and short stories.

Aside from the works enumerated, the following are among his best known books: "Acquaintances," "Children's Tales," "Baron Marcius," "To-day, Yesterday and To-morrow," "Metropolitan Morals," "The Steam Pillar," "Words, Words, Words," "American Nights," and others. There are several more in preparation.

In each of these volumes, one is struck by Molnár's deep understanding of human nature and by the daring of his imagination. This buoyant imagination has found him bestriding Pegasus time and again. Just how much longer he is destined to ride that unstable steed, only the future will tell.

Meanwhile, the plays here collected eloquently attest Ferenc Molnár's worthiness to be ranked with the leading playwrights of our day.

LOUIS RITTENBERG.

THE LAWYER

Translated from the Hungarian by

GEORGE HALÁSZ

Not yet produced in America

CHARACTERS

SARKANY, LL.D.

PUZSER

CSATO

CSERESNYES

BERTALAN

PROFESSOR OF GEOGRAPHY

PRINCIPAL

FIRST POLICEMAN

SECOND POLICEMAN

MRS. SARKANY

LENKE

MRS. MAROSI

CHAMBERMAID

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *Sarkany's study.*

At right, in the foreground, a handsome desk, with armchair. At left, sofa, small table, chairs. In front of the sofa, a lion's skin. Veranda, with large window opening to a garden, in the left rear corner. The entrance to the room is in the right rear corner. There are two doors in the left wall: the one in the front leads to Mrs. SARKANY's room, the other one to LENKE's. Between the two large doors, a small, wall-papered door, leading to Mrs. MAROSI's room. At right, near the

footlights, wall-papered door to SARKANY's chamber; in the rear, door to SARKANY's office.

When the curtain rises, BERTALAN SARKANY's first assistant; LENKE, a young girl, SARKANY's sister-in-law; Mrs. MAROSI, governess; and CSERESNYES, a provincial gentleman, are in the room.]

BERTALAN. We'll tell Mr. Sarkany.
MAROSI. Just leave it to us.

CSERESNYES. I want Jozsi to come along to the banquet. Please tell him that all the professors will be there,

except the Greek, because he died, the poor fellow. The principal will be there, too, and the entire class. We'll all drink and we'll all get drunk.

BERTALAN. We'll tell him surely, don't worry. At the *Royal*, at ten o'clock.

CSERESNYES. He may come a little earlier. And tell him, please, that I am very sorry that I didn't find him at home. I wanted to invite him personally. And then again, I was sort of curious to meet him. Just think of it, I beg of you, I haven't seen him for ten years. People change in ten weeks, let alone in ten long years.

MAROSI. Mr. Sarkany hasn't changed a bit.

CSERESNYES. I liked him best in the whole class. We sat next to each other. I never prompted any one but him. I never helped any one but him—and I never fought any one but him. My God—and we did fight a lot! We boxed together a friendship that'll last until our dying day. Yes, ma'am, we were always together. We had the first beards in the class.

MAROSI. Guess you slapped each other's faces so often that your beard came out to see what it was all about.

CSERESNYES. Perhaps. Has he still got his beard?

MAROSI. Yes, whenever he forgets to shave.

CSERESNYES. How does he look? Is he fat or lean?

MAROSI. Medium. Just the type I love.

CSERESNYES. He's certainly got far. But I always knew that he would. He was always the tattle-tale of the class.

BERTALAN. His name is in the papers every day.

CSERESNYES. While still a child one knew he'd become a criminologist. He was the one who invented all the mean tricks. He was shrewder than any of us. He was clever. He was a scoundrel. I always said he was a born lawyer.

MAROSI. And what a lawyer!

BERTALAN. Our office has the most beautiful cases of the season.

CSERESNYES. Are you his assistant?

BERTALAN. Yes.

LENKE [*comes forward*].

CSERESNYES. And the miss? Underwood? Remington?

LENKE. Neither. I am his sister-in-law.

CSERESNYES. I beg your pardon. I thought you were the typist.

BERTALAN. I am the writing machine.

CSERESNYES. And is his wife just as pretty?

BERTALAN. As they say it hereabouts: "Wish her to me."

CSERESNYES. Hereabouts?

BERTALAN. Yes. That is the greatest praise in the mercantile district on this side of the Danube.

CSERESNYES. I am really very glad to hear that. God, happiness and comfort all around. A merry apartment, a beautiful little villa in a pretty garden, a pretty wife, a pretty sister-in-law, a pretty assistant.

MAROSI. And a pretty governess.

CSERESNYES. A pretty governess! [*To BERTALAN.*] I wish her to you.

BERTALAN. Me? Never.

CSERESNYES. And what a career!

BERTALAN. Well, that's true. The boss is pretty much sought after.

Yesterday we got a beautiful little parricide case.

CSERESNYES. You don't say?

BERTALAN. Yes, sir! And what a case! As if it had been made to order for us. The defendant is as innocent as a lamb to be born to-morrow.

CSERESNYES. Very exciting.

MAROSI. Do you see that statue?

CSERESNYES. Yes, I do.

MAROSI. Well, ten years in the penitentiary look down upon you from that statue.

CSERESNYES. Beg pardon?

MAROSI. Ten years in the penitentiary. The man who gave it to us would have got that much. Look at that picture. It's a genuine Rippl-Ronai. Fifteen years.

CSERESNYES. My God!

BERTALAN. Look here! Eight years in jail look up from this lion's skin. Look at this desk. It wouldn't be here now had not a man by the name of Csutoras strangled his aunt to death. A handsome piece, eh? Worth an aunt any time.

CSERESNYES. Two of 'em.

BERTALAN. Or, if I don't offend you with the suggestion, look at our dear Mrs. Marosi.

CSERESNYES. How many years in jail?

BERTALAN. A veritable nausea—

MAROSI. Wha-a-at?

BERTALAN. A veritable nausea caught me in its grips when I heard of the trick that enabled Mrs. Marosi to exist. An embezzler was acquitted and the boss got such enormous fees that he immediately engaged a governess to take care of the miss.

CSERESNYES. Congratulations.

MAROSI. Thanks.

LENKE. This gown I'm wearing

now. . . . Do you remember Rottenkoffer's forged notes?

CSERESNYES. Very well.

LENKE. Well, you see, I got it because I hoped he'd be acquitted. Am I right, Bertalan?

BERTALAN. Yes, ma'am.

LENKE. And he *was* acquitted.

BERTALAN. And he paid like anything.

LENKE. Had he been convicted, I'd be still wearing my last year's gown.

CSERESNYES. There's no more gallant judge than the Hungarian judge. But—I'll be taking my leave now.

BERTALAN. Just leave it to us. Mr. Sarkany will surely be there.

CSERESNYES. You won't forget it, will you?

ALL THREE. No.

CSERESNYES. The ten-year class reunion, to-night, at ten o'clock, at the *Royal*, room number four. He *must* come. Good-bye. We'll drink. We'll get drunk. Good-bye, miss. We'll all be stewed. God bless you, Doctor. . . .

MAROSI. Good-bye.

BERTALAN. This way, please. Good-bye, sir. You will get the bill in the morning mail.

CSERESNYES. What bill?

BERTALAN. Forgive me, please. . . . I thought you were a customer.

CSERESNYES. You won't forget it?

BERTALAN. God will convict the parricide if I forget it. [*Exit*

CSERESNYES. BERTALAN *comes forward*.] And now we can continue our studies. Where did we leave off?

LENKE. I think the recurring decimal fractions come next.

[*Sits on sofa, opens book*.]

MAROSI [*reading a book*]. That

fellow came in just when I reached the most exciting chapter.

BERTALAN. Which chapter is it, dearest?

MAROSI. The detectives have just now entered through the secret door of the green-bearded count's castle. I think that's the place where the two million dollars are hidden.

LENKE. Yes. The recurring decimal fractions come next.

[*Sits down.*]

BERTALAN. You are still reading detective stories, Mrs. Marosi?

[*Sits down.*]

MAROSI. Of course. You don't think I'd read love stories! There is nothing more interesting than a good detective novel. Oh, Mr. Bertalan, if I could, only once in my life, see a real burglar!

BERTALAN. Look at Puzser.

MAROSI. Not that way! When he is working! When he is cracking a safe, hiding under a bed, climbing through a window! A live one! Well, go on and study, study! . . . Let's see . . . yes . . . [*Reading.*] Philip and Stopkins have pressed the button . . .

BERTALAN. The recurring decimal fractions. . . . There are—

LENKE. Pure and mixed recurring decimal fractions.

BERTALAN. What number is their sum? A finite number?

LENKE. I have a premonition I'm going to flunk.

BERTALAN [*thrusting his leg forward under the table*]. Oh, no, not at all! The mixed recurring decimal fractions . . .

LENKE. I don't know.

BERTALAN. Look around.

LENKE [*looks under the table and puts her foot on BERTALAN's*]. Oh!

The mixed recurring decimal fraction equals an ordinary fraction the numerator of which is the difference of—that results when you take the number as a whole . . . which . . . which . . .

[MAROSI *looks up from her book.*]

BERTALAN. Well?

[*He pulls his leg back.*]

LENKE. The connection has been broken.

[MAROSI *continues to read.*]

BERTALAN [*replaces his leg*]. Well?

LENKE. Which is composed of the digits before the repeat.

MAROSI. Who's kicking the table here?

BERTALAN. Are you dreaming?

MAROSI. Are you kicking?

BERTALAN. Mrs. Marosi, please, don't interrupt us. Now we have to take it all over again. Follow the next question. How many feet make one meter?

LENKE [*puts her feet on his legs*]. Feet? Two feet.

BERTALAN. Think it over!

LENKE. Two feet.

BERTALAN [*with love*]. Dearest!

MAROSI. You're at it again! [*Looks under the table.*] My God!

BERTALAN. This is simply unheard of! Every time we have something important to learn you disturb us.

LENKE. If I flunk it'll be your fault.

MAROSI. What's that? I look under the table. . . .

BERTALAN [*impertinently*]. You are here to supervise Lenke and not to look under the table. Do you understand?

MAROSI. Aren't you getting a little too fresh? Isn't it enough for you

that you are massaging Lenke's legs, under the table?

BERTALAN. No, it isn't.

MAROSI. Miss Lenke's legs?!

BERTALAN. What do you think? Do you want me to massage your legs?

MAROSI. I'll tell Mrs. Sarkany all about this. At last you'll be fired, you good-for-nothing.

BERTALAN. What did you say? You witch! Witch!

MAROSI. I won't stand for this! Not for a second! Where's Mrs. Sarkany? I won't stay here for another second. . . . You rascal! I'll fix you! You'll stop pedaling!

[Exits.]

BERTALAN [*leaping toward LENKE*]. That's what I've been waiting for! The moment has arrived!

LENKE. Ah!

[*Defends herself.*]

BERTALAN. Hurry up before some one comes in! Protective inoculation against flunking.

[*Attempts to kiss her.*]

LENKE. Bertalan! No! No! No man has ever kissed me as yet!

BERTALAN. All the better!

LENKE. Not on the lips!

BERTALAN. Where in hell else?

[*Kisses her.*]

LENKE. You bad man!

BERTALAN. Bad!

[*Kisses her again.*]

LENKE. Bad, bad!

BERTALAN. Again? [*Two kisses.*] You—hundred times beautiful one! LENKE. You—hundred times bad one!

BERTALAN. A hundred times? We haven't so much time now. We're in a hurry. Are you going to study all night?

LENKE. Yes.

BERTALAN. All right—then I'll come to your room to-night.

LENKE. Good heavens! What are you saying? At what time?

BERTALAN. Around midnight. Everything is fixed up already. I've deliberately forgotten to copy the papers of the Csongradi case.

LENKE. And?

BERTALAN. Can't you understand it? The boss will ask me to stay here for the night.

LENKE. My God, that will be terrible!

BERTALAN. Aren't you happy? I'm sure he'll ask me to stay here. I'll be working in the outer office all evening, and, at midnight, I'll visit you.

LENKE. Never!

BERTALAN. And now—may I have a little advance on account?

[*Attempts to kiss her.*]

LENKE. But not on my lips!

BERTALAN. That's the very spot where I will kiss you! I'll stand against the door so that no one can come in. . . . Here, here . . .

[*Leaps to the door in the rear, leans against it. DR. SARKANY opens the door, BERTALAN falls into his arms.*]

SARKANY. Hello! What's this?

LENKE. Heavens!

BERTALAN. I beg your pardon, Mr. Sarkany. I just wanted to go out.

SARKANY. Back first? That's a good idea. Hello, Lenke.

LENKE. Hello, Jozsi!

SARKANY. Children, he's acquitted again. They acquitted him to-day for the nineteenth time. Acquitted!

BERTALAN. You've come just at the right time.

LENKE. Who is acquitted?

SARKANY. Who? Well, who could he be? Puzser, of course! That dear, lovely, excellent, charming, brilliant and honest Puzser. A few more burglaries like this and I'll be Hungary's most sought after criminal lawyer. [*Produces flowers.*] A lady threw these at me. The students cheered me! An old lady wanted to embrace me. They would have unharnessed my horses, drained the gasoline from my car had I not come afoot.

LENKE. Isn't that wonderful? I'll put the flowers in a vase.

[*Exits.*]

SARKANY. I hope the other more important thing will succeed just as well. Hasn't Puzser been here yet?

BERTALAN. Not yet. Is he coming?

SARKANY. He must come. I'm expecting him on a most important matter.

BERTALAN. Well, since he is acquitted, what does he want here?

SARKANY. Don't be so curious. All I can tell you, son, is that it's a great thing! A very great thing! If Providence helps me, I'll be one of the best known men in the country next week.

BERTALAN. I hope Providence will help.

SARKANY. Until now it has helped me as if I had hired it. But now! Now! Much depends on it!

BERTALAN. Is it a secret?

SARKANY. Yes. To-day, it's a secret—to-morrow, the whole of Europe may speak of nothing but that. But let's not speak of it now. I am so happy I may accidentally betray myself. You know that at heart I am a very modest man. But my speech

to-day—and I am not boasting now—was the best ever delivered in a Hungarian courtroom. It was a grand speech, son.

BERTALAN. The other Hungarian lawyers know nothing but how to kid the State's attorney.

SARKANY. That's just how I began my speech. With my first sentence, I won the audience, with the second, the presiding judge, with the third, the case. This is how I began it: "Your Honor! Justice is not blind, but cross-eyed."

BERTALAN. I don't get you.

SARKANY. Don't you? Well, the Assistant State's Attorney is slightly cock-eyed. The entire courtroom burst out laughing. The presiding judge was laughing, the audience was laughing, the defendant, the court-crier, the guards were laughing. Even His Majesty's bust was laughing. Only the State's Attorney was dark and gloomy. At that moment, four thousand years in the penitentiary were awaiting Puzser. Then I continued: "Justice is sometimes cross-eyed, Your Honor, that is to say, she does not see what she is looking at. As in the case of this eminently honest man, John Puzser, etc., etc." Then I began to talk about Italian criminology. I hurled Lombroso at their heads, nine times in succession. "Sin, Your Honor, is simply another demonstration of life—just as birth, or death—or insanity, of which it is merely a manifestation." Then I referred to Puzser's immaculate past.

BERTALAN. Puzser was in jail eighteen times.

SARKANY. That makes no difference. But, because of that, I painted his life in dark colors. Puzser burst out crying, the presiding judge burst

out crying, the audience was crying, the guards, the court crier, the statues were crying—only the State's Attorney was laughing. I looked around triumphantly, I called humanitarian feelings to my aid: mercy and pity. I made one last thrust at the State's Attorney's cross-eyedness and then I sat down. Applause broke forth. They called me before the footlights five times.

BERTALAN. And then?

SARKANY. Then they acquitted him. I remained victorious. The reporters asked for copies of my speech. A distinguished German magazine asked for a picture of me. They are charming fellows, those reporters. I'll donate to their pension fund such a sum that—that I myself will be surprised at the amount.

[*Paces to and fro, full of enthusiasm.*]

BERTALAN. I have a message for you. Mr. Cseresnyes was here.

SARKANY. What Cseresnyes?

BERTALAN. A schoolmate of yours. To-night will be your ten-year class reunion.

SARKANY. Oh, I see. Cseresnyes.

BERTALAN. He was speaking of you very enthusiastically.

SARKANY. Yes? Well, that's easily explainable, isn't it? He was the one I hated most at school. Does the reunion take place to-night?

BERTALAN. To-night, at ten o'clock, in room number four of the *Royal*.

SARKANY. To-night? Great! Excellent!

BERTALAN. You seem to be very happy about it.

SARKANY. Do I? Well, what else is there?

BERTALAN. Arpai paid an install-

ment. Stattburg was here and asked for grace.

SARKANY. We grant no grace. That's God's business.

BERTALAN. He can't pay before the first. He has eight small children.

SARKANY. What do I care? Go ahead and have a writ issued against him right away. It isn't my business to protect the race from extinction.

BERTALAN. And what about the humanitarianism, mercy, and pity you were talking about?

SARKANY. I deny that I ever mentioned them. Secondly, I deny that what I said was correct. Thirdly, I deny that what I said concerned me. Anyway, there is no mercy in civil suits.

BERTALAN. That's nice!

SARKANY. My motto in criminal suits is: "There are so few of us that even the parricides ought to be forgiven." My motto in civil suits: "There are so many of us lawyers that no creditors ought to be forgiven."

BERTALAN. Beautiful!

SARKANY. In civil suits, money talks and lets the dog bark. And if the money does not talk, then the dog will bite.

BERTALAN. Excellent!

SARKANY. That's the best, to be the plaintiff's lawyer. The defendant's lawyer is a chained prisoner, the plaintiff's, a hawk—soaring free and high in the air. The real lawyer represents the interests of his clients.

BERTALAN. And who represents humanitarianism?

SARKANY. I have nothing to do with that. I am a lawyer and not a philanthropist. Have you copied the papers in the Csongradi case?

BERTALAN. That's just it. I haven't yet. I had to run around so much to-day.

SARKANY. But the case'll come up for trial to-morrow! I'll teach you. You'll copy it to-night, if it takes all night.

BERTALAN. Here in the office?

SARKANY. Of course! You know very well that I don't permit any papers to be taken out of here. Come back after supper and copy them in the outer office. And if it's necessary, you'll work until six in the morning.

BERTALAN. What shall I do? . . . I'll have to spend the night here. Really, I am no better than a slave.

SARKANY. That's not true, and you know very well it isn't. You are nothing but a loafer, a good-for-nothing, lazy boy. And now go and tell my wife that I've come home.

BERTALAN. Yes, sir.

[*Exits. Enter Mrs. SARKANY.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Hello, dearie!

SARKANY. No dearie-ing now! Sit down, madame.

MRS. SARKANY. You don't really want to continue your morning sermon, do you?

SARKANY. Yes, I do.

MRS. SARKANY. All right, go ahead.

SARKANY. Sit down! I am sorry that I have to becloud the clear day of one of my most glorious victories with the ugly storm-clouds of petty family quarrels.

MRS. SARKANY. You talk as if you were in a courtroom.

SARKANY. That's just where I am. You are the defendant! The police lieutenant spends all of his time here in my apartment. In my apartment! I will not tolerate this.

MRS. SARKANY. You're a donkey.

SARKANY. I shall punish you. Rise!

MRS. SARKANY. Well, what's the charge? Am I the defendant? All right.

SARKANY. Madame, don't joke. I am informed that the lieutenant is always here, every time I am in the house of justice fulfilling my duty. Is this true?

MRS. SARKANY. But—

SARKANY. Is this true?

MRS. SARKANY. Yes, it is.

SARKANY. What can you say for yourself?

MRS. SARKANY. First of all, *you* introduced him to me, *you* asked him to come to dinner, *you* told him to feel at home here.

SARKANY. Of course I told him to feel himself at home here!

MRS. SARKANY. The lieutenant is a handsome fellow, a good conversationalist, and, lastly, the cornerstone of our office.

SARKANY. Is that so? Well, I am going to kick this cornerstone out of here! Do you understand me? I'll kick him out of here! I don't need any cornerstone, I can exist alone quite well! When I was a beginner—I can't say that it was bad in those days to take the criminal aside and tell him: "You confounded scoundrel, there is only one man in the world who may be able to help you out of this, and that's Sarkany!" But I don't need that sort of help any more. And even if I should, I wouldn't tolerate his making love to you. My banner is the flag of the modern criminologist—and not my wife's skirt. I can proudly say that I don't need it. Thank God, every single burglar knows who I am.

MRS. SARKANY. Well, that's no reason to kick any one out.

SARKANY. I can kick out anybody I please. If you don't believe me I'll show you. If I find the lieutenant here once more drinking my cognac, smoking my cigars and making love to my wife, I'll throw him out. Do you understand? I'll teach you not to have constant constabulary attendance.

MRS. SARKANY. What's this? Are you seriously suspecting me?

SARKANY. I am not suspecting anybody. I know what I am talking about.

MRS. SARKANY. Well, what do you know? If you knew why I tolerate the lieutenant you'd beg my forgiveness.

SARKANY. What are you talking about?

MRS. SARKANY. One day you'll kneel at my feet in gratitude and beg my pardon with bent head. But I'll have to suffer until that day.

SARKANY. A criminal case.

MRS. SARKANY. I won't say another word. Trust me.

SARKANY. Murder?

MRS. SARKANY. No use asking me; I shan't talk. But one day you'll beg my pardon. Don't ask anything; I won't betray any trust. I've heard something of a reunion. Aren't you going to have supper at home to-night?

SARKANY. No, I'll have my supper at the *Royal*.

MRS. SARKANY. And are you going to come home in the morning?

SARKANY. Most probably.

MRS. SARKANY. And will you bring me home some of the dessert?

SARKANY. I will.

MRS. SARKANY. Bring some figs.

SARKANY. All right. But the lieutenant won't get any.

MRS. SARKANY. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Are you still thinking of the lieutenant? You don't like that man.

SARKANY. I don't like these men who want to look like hussars when they are merely constables. A police officer who wears breeches cannot catch thieves.

MRS. SARKANY. I am sure it was Puzser who invented this gossip. Well, that's like you. A fine source of information he is.

SARKANY. I choose my sources myself and it's none of your business. Anyway, Puzser is a reliable and honest man.

MRS. SARKANY. He was in jail only eighteen times.

SARKANY. Eighteen injustices. Eighteen juridical mistakes.

MRS. SARKANY. You don't mean to tell me you consider Puzser an honest man?

SARKANY. What I believe of him is of no importance. The important thing is what I say of him. And, come to think of it, you, too, talked of him in a different way when he was still arranging balls at Patona. You always danced the second quadrille with him.

MRS. SARKANY. I could not know in advance that he'd embezzle the orphanage's funds!

SARKANY. He couldn't very well embezzle from the treasury of the Bank of England. Every one embezzles from the funds he is entrusted with.

MRS. SARKANY. Nevertheless, I shouldn't use him as my spy if I

were you. If I get angry, I'll just grab him and throw him out.

SARKANY. Throw him out? What did you say?

MRS. SARKANY. I'll—throw—him—out!

SARKANY. Don't be silly. Honor the scoundrels, darling, for if there were only honest men in the world I should have to steal my daily bread. You want to throw him out? All right, if you want me to beg, go ahead and do it.

MRS. SARKANY. To beg? Why?

SARKANY. Don't act as if you didn't know! You know very well who Puzser is! Well, who brings me the finest cases? Puzser! Who visits, night after night, all the cafés where the card sharps congregate in order to get for me the most sensational defenses—and all this for a minimum agent's fee? Puzser! Who brought, for a paltry honorarium, the triple murder of Soroksériut to my office when others offered him fortunes? Puzser! Who is friend, counselor and confidant of all the criminals? Who gives them the addresses of lawyers? Who informs me weeks ahead of all the coming burglaries and robberies? Who furnishes me with the most experienced, the most interesting, the shrewdest witnesses? Puzser, Puzser, and Puzser! Throw out this man? Why, my office is based entirely on him, he is my right-hand man, my left-hand man, my most important client, my prima-donna! I beg of you, gentlemen of the jury, return a verdict of not guilty!

[Hurries out of the room, full of enthusiasm.]

MRS. SARKANY. What an orator! Heavens, what a brilliant orator!

CHAMBERMAID [entering]. Lieutenant Csato!

MRS. SARKANY. Oh, ask him to come in.

[Exit CHAMBERMAID. Enter CSATO.]

CSATO. I kiss your hand. It sounded as if I had heard a little quarrel. Am I right? Was that brute tormenting you again?

MRS. SARKANY. You're wrong. I've never been so fascinated by him as I am now. Never before in his life has he talked so brilliantly—not even at the trial of the great forgery case when I fell in love with him. He simply surpassed himself.

CSATO. Is he delivering speeches even at home?

MRS. SARKANY. And what speeches!

CSATO. Who was the defendant this time?

MRS. SARKANY. Puzser. I think he is most lovable when he is defending Puzser. Puzser is the man who fires him most. Schiller could write only when he was smelling the odor of rotting apples.

CSATO. So Puzser is his rotten apple.

MRS. SARKANY. Right!

CSATO. My dear lady, this is all very nice—but you know very well I haven't come to hear this! I was waiting for you yesterday afternoon from three until half-past nine. You didn't come. You fooled me. Although everything was ready in the little room, everything was awaiting you. Rosy dimness, the odor of pine trees in the air, strawberries and French champagne.

MRS. SARKANY. You must have spent a lot.

CSATO. Yes. And you didn't come. The dimness was extinguished

by the evening, the odor of pine trees was transformed into smoke, the strawberries rotted away, and I drank the champagne.

MRS. SARKANY. Now you know that you shouldn't always take things women tell you very seriously.

CSATO. She who keeps her word is no woman! I shouldn't be able to fall in love with a healthy woman. Ah, those diseased, capricious, hysterical, perverse, hypermodern, super-neurasthenic women! They are the ones I adore!—Those sweet, darling toys in a man's hands.

MRS. SARKANY. Then you don't love me, either.

CSATO. You only feign healthiness. Hysteria blooms within you secretly—like a modest violet at the foot of an elm. But your real nature will break forth, your real self: super-neurasthenia! And then you will throw yourself at my feet.

MRS. SARKANY. I doubt that very much. But let's not talk so much of it or else I may catch it—How is the big blackmail case getting along?

CSATO. I can't speak of that. The police are investigating the matter in the greatest secrecy. My career is at stake if anything becomes known. But if you want to know something—the documents are in my apartment.

MRS. SARKANY. You always say that the documents are in your apartment! But I can't go to your apartment!

CSATO. Why can't you? You'd come to a discreet man. I can proudly say that most distinguished ladies have already been there.

MRS. SARKANY. Is there perhaps a new development?

CSATO. Yes. The most interesting

new development that ever existed! It's sensational!

MRS. SARKANY. Tell me . . . tell me!

CSATO. How cold you are when you say that! Oh, you are no woman unless you tremble, shiver from curiosity.

MRS. SARKANY. Tremble? Well! [*Feigns trembling, jocularly.*] My dear Csato, tell me.

CSATO. Will you come to my place to-night?

MRS. SARKANY. No.

CSATO. You see, there, in the rosy dimness of the room, with the smell of pines, strawberries and champagne around us, I would tell you. Separate entrance. Quiet street. I give you my word of honor I shall not take advantage of the situation.

MRS. SARKANY. You swear you will not?

CSATO. I swear.

MRS. SARKANY. Do you vow you won't even try it?

CSATO. I vow.

MRS. SARKANY. Then I won't go at all!

CSATO. Ah, a whim at last. I adore to be treated thus by nervous, whimsical, foolish women! The only thing I don't adore in you is that you act as if I were a lemon. You squeeze me out in behalf of your husband and then you throw me away. You need me only as a police lieutenant. As a man, you don't care for me.

MRS. SARKANY. Perhaps, yes. [*Coquettishly.*] Perhaps, no.

CSATO. Ah, this tone!—My dear lady, the blackmail case is simply marvelous. Persons of very high rank are implicated! The most distinguished names in the country are be-

smirched! The most famed ancestors will turn round and round in their graves. There will be an earthquake in the cemetery, they will revolve so quickly.

MRS. SARKANY. Tell me! I swear it will remain a secret.

CSATO. Are you serious?

MRS. SARKANY. Very much so.

CSATO. Do you vow?

MRS. SARKANY. I do.

CSATO. Then I won't tell you at all!

MRS. SARKANY. But I am very curious now, I am nervous, I am just itching from anxiety.

CSATO. Oh, you are itching already? Didn't I tell you? The neurasthenia is coming out. Are you really itching?

MRS. SARKANY. Is that what you want? All right. A shiver has run down my spine . . . don't look at me that way . . . oh . . . you conquering, intoxicating, triumphant man . . . you demon!

CSATO. The detectives are on the scent already. One of the criminals asked me for the name of a good attorney. There hasn't yet been such an interesting case in the world. . . . The documents are in my apartment.

MRS. SARKANY. No . . . I can't do that. . . . But, perhaps . . . You come here to-night. . . . He will not be home. He will go out. . . .

CSATO. At what time shall I come?

MRS. SARKANY. At ten o'clock. My husband is going to his class reunion.

CSATO. And I—to a rendezvous! Oh, I am so happy! So your real nature has at last come to the surface.

MRS. SARKANY. You conquering

male, you demi-god, you brutal strength!

CSATO. Strength?

[*He shows his muscles.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Come for a cup of tea. . . . But go now—you have stirred up the peace of my soul. . . . I feel it. . . .

[*Feigns fatigue.*]

CSATO. I am going.

MRS. SARKANY. Be here on time. We'll have tea and—and—

CSATO. And?

MRS. SARKANY. Cakes.

[*Enter CHAMBERMAID.*]

CHAMBERMAID. Mr. Puzser is here, madame.

CSATO. Puzser? I wish I'd never hear that name again.

MRS. SARKANY. Are you still angry at him?

CSATO. Of course I am! It's on account of him I am not a captain yet. I'll never forgive him for that. But some day I'll get him!

[*Goes toward door in rear.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Ask him to come in.

CHAMBERMAID. Good-bye, Mr. Lieutenant.

CSATO [*looks at her*]. God, but she is healthy! [*Exits.*]

[*Enter PUZSER. He is a middle-aged man, charming, whimsical. He is rather badly dressed, but his gestures and movements are elegant. He carries a package in his hand.*]

PUZSER. Good evening.

MRS. SARKANY. The devil take you!

PUZSER. That's nice. Everywhere else they say: welcome! And, to boot, there was a policeman here just now. Well, one isn't safe even in the office of one's lawyer any more.

MRS. SARKANY. Puzser, I've observed that you always begin humbly and end in an impertinent manner. Now you've hit on a new method. What have you brought?

PUZSER. This is something for Mr. Sarkany; he needs it very badly. Mr. Sarkany will be a world-famous man. I'll help him to become one. Is he at home?

MRS. SARKANY. Yes. He's asked for you several times.

PUZSER. I thought so. He has an idea that'll beat the world.

[Enter MRS. MAROSI.]

MAROSI. Thank God, I've found you at last, Mrs. Sarkany. I want to tell you that I won't stay here a moment longer. What that fellow Bertalan does to me, well, it's . . . I don't care if— Oh! Mr. Puzser! A real burglar! Your humblest admirer, Mr. Puzser! A real burglar!

PUZSER. How do you do, my solitary admirer!

MRS. SARKANY. You always have something against Bertalan. He's a very respectable fellow.

MRS. MAROSI. I beg your pardon, but he can't be respectable if—

PUZSER. You ought to have enough tact not to talk of respectability in my presence.

MAROSI. I am sorry if I have offended you, Mr. Puzser.

PUZSER. Please, Mrs. Marosi, close the door. But from without.

MAROSI. I can take a hint, Mr. Puzser.

[Exits.]

PUZSER. That's the way to treat 'em.

[He starts to go also.]

MRS. SARKANY. Wait a moment, my dear sir. I have something to say to you.

PUZSER. At your service, Mrs. Sarkany.

MRS. SARKANY. Puzser, listen to me quietly, and don't interrupt me. And don't get impertinent later on, either. You'd better drop that habit of yours completely.

PUZSER. Your humblest servant, my dear Mrs. Sarkany.

MRS. SARKANY. You take advantage of the kindness you are treated with in this house.

PUZSER. I?!

MRS. SARKANY. Yes, you. You're spying on me. That would be merely a tactless thing, but you also tell on me to my husband—and that's quite ungentlemanly, you know. I never expected that of you.

PUZSER. I beg a thousand pardons, my dear Mrs. Sarkany, but I never told anything about you to your husband. All I said was that it would be better if the lieutenant came here less frequently. I can't help it; I loathe policemen.

MRS. SARKANY. You spoke to my husband as if—

PUZSER. Hush! Hush! Some one's coming!

[Makes a nervous gesture.]

MRS. SARKANY. Don't get nervous, no one is coming!

PUZSER. Excuse me, I'm always under the impression that I'm working.

MRS. SARKANY. You talked as if the lieutenant felt not the most correct—what shall I say . . .

PUZSER. What-you-may-call-it.

MRS. SARKANY. There you go again! So you said ugly things.

PUZSER. I give my late word of honor, I said nothing ugly. I hate the lieutenant, not as a man but as a policeman. That's all. And if you

permit me, I'll give you some good advice.

MRS. SARKANY. Advice? Well, I'd like to hear that.

PUZSER. It isn't nice to be curious. But I'll tell you, just the same. Don't worry. Now look here, ma'am, I am still hesitating, but I think I'll undertake a great enterprise to-night.

MRS. SARKANY. Ah! In whose house?

PUZSER. Very little, or shall we say none, of your business! It's a business secret! We hope it'll be successful.

MRS. SARKANY. We? Hope alone.

PUZSER. I know, you selfish female, that you want me to be caught so that your husband may have some one to defend. You don't care for a poor burglar! At any rate, if my enterprise does not succeed to-night, you'll have to get along without my company for quite some time.

MRS. SARKANY. Puzser, Puzser, will you never reform?

PUZSER. Don't try to reform me. And even this you say merely as a matter of form. Inside of yourself you hope, nay, you wish, that I go a-burglaring every night. I shall not reform, I don't want to cause your husband any sorrow. So, if I am locked up I shan't be able to keep watch over your virtue, and—

MRS. SARKANY. What sort of tone are you using!

PUZSER. This is a warning tone. Don't play with fire. Don't flirt with the lieutenant because you'll burn yourself. "Lord Breeches," as we call him, comes here all too often. Do you get me?

MRS. SARKANY. What do you care? He comes to my husband.

PUZSER. That's just it! You poor deceived woman! La Traviata!

MRS. SARKANY. Puzser!

PUZSER. Beg pardon. Didn't he say that he had a great blackmail case on his hands?

MRS. SARKANY. How do you know?

PUZSER. I know his tricks. Once he seduced, with this very trick, the wife of a young lawyer. Didn't he say that persons of high rank are mixed up in it?

MRS. SARKANY. Yes, he did. And that he knew who the guilty party was.

PUZSER. I'm afraid it's too late. Have you been in his apartment already to look at the documents?

MRS. SARKANY. No.

PUZSER. It isn't too late then. Well, this blackmail case is just one great, big lie. The whole thing is an attempt at extortion, but it is directed against you.

MRS. SARKANY. You don't say!

PUZSER. I do say so! Woman, you are walking on the brink of a precipice! He is a professional seducer.

MRS. SARKANY. Seducer?

PUZSER. Hush! Hush! They're coming!

[*Nervously jumps about.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Oh, go on!

[*Enter Mrs. MAROSI.*]

MAROSI. Excuse me. . . .

PUZSER. Didn't I tell you some one was coming? [*Triumphantly.*] My ears!

MAROSI. Am I disturbing you, dear Mr. Puzser?

PUZSER. Not at all. My business is with Mr. Sarkany.

[*Exits, taking his package with him.*]

MRS. SARKANY. What do you want, Mrs. Marosi? Why are you pestering me, for heaven's sake!

MAROSI. All I want to say is that Bertalan doesn't want to let me alone. I try to do my duty when I supervise them, but he, instead of studying with Miss Lenke . . . under the table, I don't dare to say it aloud, Mrs. Sarkany . . . to make a long story short, I won't stay in this house another minute. After all, I am not a dog!

MRS. SARKANY. You're right in that. Make peace with him.

MAROSI. I shall leave to-day, Mrs. Sarkany, to-day.

MRS. SARKANY. I've been told so sixty times.

MAROSI. This is a question of confidence, if you please. I am going to deduce the consequences. I am going to ask all sorts of questions and shall deduce all sorts of things. Throw him out.

MRS. SARKANY. But you said just now *you* were going.

MAROSI. I'm not crazy to give up this steady position because of that good-for-nothing.

[Enter BERTALAN.]

MRS. SARKANY. Well, here's Bertalan. Settle the affair with him. And leave me out of these quarrels.

[Exits.]

MAROSI [*angrily*]. You good-for-nothing! Good-for-nothing! Good-for-nothing!

BERTALAN. Mrs. Marosi, you old witch, listen here. As long as you were only cursing and swearing at me, I didn't care. But if you dare again say just one word against my position, I'm going to your room one night and strangle you to death. Do you understand? Witch!

MAROSI. Ah, even one's life is in danger in this place! Murderer! Help! Detectives! Police!

[Hurries out, terrorized.]

BERTALAN. At least she'll leave me in peace now. [*Knocks on the door.*] Lenke!

LENKE [*from within*]. Who is it?

BERTALAN. It's me, Lenke, come out.

[Enter LENKE.]

LENKE. What is it?

BERTALAN. Look, here's the blessed document that'll enable me to spend the night under the same roof with you.

LENKE. My God, I'm so afraid of this.

BERTALAN. You'll come out to me to the typist's room that opens from the hall. There you'll rest your tired head on my chest, and I'll sink into your soft arms and vice versa.

LENKE. Vice versa?

BERTALAN. Yes. You'll sink into my strong arms.

LENKE. To go out at night to a man . . .

BERTALAN. I am not a man. I am just a boy. We shall be kissing each other, and that will give you strength for algebra and me strength for copying. Your exam will take place to-morrow.

LENKE. To-morrow morning. No, I won't go out to you. That would be a sin. . . .

BERTALAN. That will be absolutely no sin at all. You know what would be a sin?

LENKE. What?

BERTALAN. Well, how shall I explain it to you? It's rather difficult. But wait a minute. Have you ever read a novel called "The Demi-virgin"?

LENKE. What do you think of me? Who do you think I am? Do you think I am the kind of girl who—does not know the world's literature?

BERTALAN. So you have read it?

LENKE. Madányi's translation is, I think, the best.

BERTALAN. Well, in that case I haven't very much to explain to you.

LENKE. I still maintain that to meet at night is a great sin.

BERTALAN. Listen. I'm a jurist, I studied criminal law, and I know what sin is! Theft, deception, embezzlement are crimes. To kiss a girl in the dark is not a crime, it's merely impertinence.

LENKE. But I can't come out to you. I can't do it.

BERTALAN. I'll tell you something. I'll come to you. I can do it.

LENKE. At last you've understood me. I like it when my ideal is a clever man. I have to study all night long, anyway, in order not to flunk. If you come in and I don't throw you out, is that a crime?

BERTALAN. No, it isn't. It's a virtue.

LENKE. I'm glad that you're so liberal. And I think I can study much better if you kiss me.

BERTALAN. All right, I'll start giving you encouragement right away.

LENKE. No, no . . . some one may come in.

BERTALAN. I'll stand in the doorway. Here.

[*Kisses her. Enter PUZSER.*]

PUZSER. Oh! What's this?

BERTALAN. Beg pardon. I wanted to go in.

PUZSER. I know, sonny. No excitement; it's nothing. I was young once myself.

LENKE. What do you mean, Mr. Puzser?

PUZSER. You want to cheat me?

BERTALAN. Not at all.

PUZSER. You're in love with each other, children; I know it, I see it. And that's why I want to have your help. Whatever lovers wish always turns out well. I want you to pray that my enterprise succeeds.

LENKE. What enterprise?

PUZSER. That doesn't concern you. God will know what to do, you just pray. God is already notified of it.

BERTALAN. Puzser, I'm afraid.

PUZSER. I'm not. I've had a lucky day to-day and I hope this will also succeed. I've already been acquitted once to-day.

LENKE. Really? And I haven't congratulated you yet. Congratulations.

PUZSER. Thank you. But there's a little trouble. You see, I am a considerate man and I don't want to ruin Mr. Sarkany's happiness. Promise me that what I am going to tell you now you will never tell him, ever.

BERTALAN	}	We promise.
LENKE		

PUZSER. The theft I was charged with was, alas, not committed by me. But don't tell him anything about this; he would feel very badly if he knew. He thinks I've been acquitted because of his speech.

BERTALAN. It will remain an eternal secret.

PUZSER. Guess I'd lose his trust forever if he found out that I was innocent.

LENKE. You're a tactful man, Mr. Puzser.

PUZSER. Love me, children, and you won't go wrong. Never in your life will you have such a good friend

as I am. Just go ahead and take your exams, young man, and I'll get you a clientele that'll be the envy of everybody.

BERTALAN. You are really very good, Mr. Puzser. . . . I really don't know how I earned so much consideration. . . .

PUZSER. I am the friend of lovers, sonny. Courage, children. And pray that my enterprise to-night may be successful.

LENKE. I think, Mr. Puzser—

PUZSER. Hush! Hush! Some one is coming!

[*Nervous gesture.*]

BERTALAN. Can't you lose that habit, Puzser?

LENKE. I'm so afraid you're planning something bad. You ought to stop this ugly profession of yours.

PUZSER. It isn't ugly at all.

SARKANY'S VOICE. Puzser! Puzser!

PUZSER. Here's the boss! Didn't I tell you some one was coming? My ears!

BERTALAN. God bless you, Mr. Puzser!

LENKE. God bless you.

PUZSER. Don't you wish me luck?

BERTALAN. If you want it so much—

[*Exits.*]

LENKE. Lots of luck!

[*Exits.*]

PUZSER [*looks around*]. Oh, boy, this is something new! I'll steal that. [*Attempts to take a small statue off the desk.*] Hey, what new trick is this? Damn it, why everything is chained to the desk! What a shyster!

[*Enter SARKANY.*]

SARKANY. I tried on the costume you brought me.

PUZSER. Does it fit?

SARKANY. Excellently! Puzser, I'm so excited! Think of it! In a day or two every one will be talking of me! Of me and of my heroic deed. I can already see the headlines: "Attorney in the Clutches of the Police!" "The Police Exposed!" Puzser, Puzser, I feel like a bride before her wedding-night.

PUZSER. Follow my instructions closely. Wait for me here, in this room, at the appointed time. I'll look around outside and will whistle when everything is clear.

SARKANY. To be very frank, the thought of mixing with criminals makes me shudder a little.

PUZSER. Why, you live on them!

SARKANY. I know— And yet . . . to sit in a smoky den with card sharps, fences, pickpockets! . . .

PUZSER. If you wear my clothes they won't even notice you. Just take care, don't betray yourself. The idea is yours, but as far as its execution is concerned—follow my advice.

SARKANY. I've already made out my program. I'll sit down as if I were one of them. I'll even dirty my face.

PUZSER. Put a jimmy in each of your pockets. Don't say I am not a thoughtful man, boss. Here they are.

[*Hands over jimmies.*]

SARKANY. Thanks. I'll sit down, I'll even play cards with them. Is it necessary to introduce myself?

PUZSER. So long as you have money, no!

SARKANY. Very well, I'll play cards until the policemen arrive and stage the raid. Then I'll act as if I were frightened. A policeman will step up to me and request me to identify myself. I'll begin to stutter as if I weren't able to identify myself, and then the lieutenant will arrest me and

take me to the station—not suspecting even for a second that beneath the ragged clothes beats the heart of modern criminology. On my way to the station I'll do nothing but watch the behavior of the police. The newspapers are full of complaints that the police, under the pretense of raids, arrest innocent men and poor laborers, and that they treat honest working girls as if they were God knows what.

PUZSER. That's right. I hate the police.

SARKANY. Then I'll observe how roughly they treat the poor men in jail. And when I have observed everything, I'll take out my papers, tell them my name, and, the next day, I'll publish my experiences in all the papers. A day after, I'll deliver a sensational lecture at the Bar Association. I'll declare war on police brutality in the name of modern criminology. I'll tell them how I mixed, like a modern Harun-al-Rashid, among the people; how I laid myself open to the sticks of policemen and the hoofs of police horses, Your Honor; twenty-four hours later the whole country will speak, yell, bellow and thunder of nothing but this; on the fifth day, I'll be a celebrated man, the apostle of humanity, mercy, humanitarianism! Gentlemen of the jury, I beg of you to return a verdict of not guilty!

PUZSER. Some climber the boss is! Are your papers in order?

SARKANY. Yes, they are. I have all the necessary papers in this wallet. Money, calling cards, letters addressed to me, railroad pass, trolley pass, ferry pass, pass to the Imperial and the Lucas baths. But tell me, when will the raid begin?

PUZSER. You can never tell that.

It will be advisable to go early. Dress early and I'll take you there. I am sorry, though, I won't be able to stay with you, boss.

SARKANY. Why not?

PUZSER [*significantly*]. I have some business to attend to.

SARKANY. Puzser, you don't intend to—

PUZSER. Yes, I do.

SARKANY. Burglary?

PUZSER. You are my lawyer; I may confess to you—yes, a burglary.

SARKANY. Puzser, Puzser, when will you reform? How often have I told you that a man so clever, so skillful as you are could easily make a good living in some honest profession? Now, for instance, were you a lawyer—

PUZSER. Thank you, I prefer to stick to my honest vocation.

SARKANY. At least—will it be interesting—I mean—the case?

PUZSER. Very much so. More than interesting.

SARKANY. Sensational?

PUZSER. Even more than that. The "Law Journal" will devote pages to it.

SARKANY. Why don't you sit down for a second, my dear Mr. Puzser? Take a seat, please.

PUZSER. Thank you. If I may so express myself, I am trying out a brand new method.

SARKANY. Puzser! Both as a law-abiding and honest citizen and as your lawyer, it is my moral duty to dissuade you from committing this crime.

PUZSER. I think so myself. Guess I shouldn't do it at all. And there is so much persuasive power in you, boss, that if you talk for a few more minutes. . . .

SARKANY. I haven't said a word. Where will it take place?

PUZSER. I can't tell you that.

SARKANY. What depravity! And why do you think it will be sensational? What will make it an outstanding affair?

PUZSER. Everything! The place, the time, the method! No such thing ever existed under the sun. Rabbi Akiba will tender his resignation.

SARKANY. You can't be reformed at all. One must become bitter at the sight of so much cynicism. Shame on you! But just the same, I don't want to—I don't want to take your interest in the enterprise away from you. Have you prepared it carefully?

PUZSER. It is simply impossible to do it any better. I worked on the plan for two nights in succession; only the last, detailed measurements are still lacking. I have the map, with many illustrations, at home. It's like a military map. Every match which may be lighted in my pursuit is marked. I haven't forgotten to put in all the bells and buzzers. Every piece of furniture is in it in order to save me from unnecessary stumbles. For a modern burglar uses his flashlight only in utmost danger!

SARKANY. Fie, how clever!

PUZSER. It'll be a pretty difficult affair. I've looked it up in the Penal Code I have at home. It all depends on how appreciative the presiding judge will be. It may amount to several years.

SARKANY. Magnificent! That is to say—shame on you!

PUZSER. Why should I be ashamed when I am not ashamed of it? That's my profession! We may even go so far as to say that I possess a well-developed sense of moral values. I

rob rich people only. You, on the other hand—

SARKANY. Puzser, you overstep your limits. Don't try to compare me with you. As a matter of fact, you ought to be more grateful to me. To-day, I again saved you.

PUZSER. Well, you are right. Why shouldn't you have a good time, too? Thanks.

SARKANY. And as far as your sense of moral values is concerned, I think you take unfair advantage of that expression.

PUZSER. I can explain every one of my acts, because I'm a man of character, boss.

SARKANY. It's nice you don't claim to be a man of Roman character.

PUZSER. No, I'm not that. I am a man of modern character.

[Enter LENKE.]

LENKE. Supper is ready! Jozsi, aren't you going to have your supper at home?

SARKANY. Why, is it as late as all that already?

PUZSER [*takes out SARKANY's watch from SARKANY's vest pocket*]. Five minutes past nine.

[*Sinks the watch in his own pocket.*]

SARKANY. No, child, I won't sup at home. I'm going to the class reunion.

LENKE. Will you bring me some of the dessert?

SARKANY. Yes, I will.

LENKE. Dates, please! Have a good time. Good night, Mr. Puzser. I'll hold my thumb.

[Exits.]

SARKANY. Well, I'm going to dress. Good luck!

PUZSER. Good luck! *Au revoir!* And, wait for me here. I'll look

around outside to see whether there's any one around. You can come when I whistle. And climb out through the window so that the servants won't see you.

SARKANY. Through the window? I'll be here in a minute. Good luck!

[Hurries out. PUZSER remains alone in the room. Looks around. Takes a large plan out of his pocket.]

PUZSER. Only the last, detailed measurements are still lacking. Now let's see. Here, this is the window of the veranda. That's all right. From there to the desk, one—two—[Pacing the distance.]—eight feet. That's settled. No furniture between the window and the desk. I won't stumble over anything in the dark. And now we are going to put the window lock out of order. I'll merely shut the window but won't lock it. [Does what he says.] Why, this new lock-breaker is simply marvelous. Just one turn and everything is fixed up. A Greek patent. Quite expensive, too. It's a darn shame you can't steal burglars' tools. You have to buy them! Some one is coming!

[The accustomed nervous gesture. Enter MRS. MAROSI.]

MAROSI. I won't stay here for another minute unless I get satisfaction. Not for another minute. They are threatening me with strangulation! . . . Look! Mr. Puzser! Are you still here?

PUZSER. I am going right now. Where are you going, grandma?

MAROSI. I won't stay in this house another second with that good-for-nothing. I'm going to Buda, to my aunt.

PUZSER. Forever?

MAROSI. Forever! Ah, when shall I again see a real, live burglar! Perhaps, never!

[Exits.]

PUZSER. Good-night, grandma. You'll be here to-morrow, never fear. Now everything is all right. I'll just take this piece here and—[Attempts to put a piece of virtu in his pocket but it is chained to desk.] What a shyster! Lo, that's not tied down! [Picks up a wallet.] What's that line in "Othello"? "Equip thyself with money." Well, I'll put this wallet away. [Does so.] Oh, they'll notice the boss when he climbs out. [Turns out the light.] Charming room—au revoir, until midnight!

[Bows and goes out. Enter

SARKANY. He is dressed in ragged clothes. Around his throat, a red shawl. He wears a worn cap.]

SARKANY [alone]. That's settled. Is it so dark already? They're having their supper. Oh, but I'm excited. Courage, Mr. Sarkany, the papers will devote pages to your adventure. Forward—to glory! I think I've forgotten to take something with me. It seems something of my make-up is missing. [Whistle is heard from without.] That's Puzser's signal. God, but I'm nervous! Courage, Mr. Sarkany, the papers will all write about you! The dailies, the weeklies, the funnies, the monthlies, all of them! *Sic itur ad astral*

[Leaps out through the window and disappears.]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

PUBLIC
LIB.

[SCENE: *The same.* TIME: *The same night.* AT RISE: MRS. SARKANY and LENKE, *after supper.*]

LENKE. I already know the most important things. But I am not quite sure of the algebra as yet.

MRS. SARKANY. And you say this on the eve of the exams? Why didn't you study?

LENKE. God knows, I did study—but one is never sure.

MRS. SARKANY. I do hope you'll not flunk.

LENKE. I'll study all night long.

MRS. SARKANY. All night? Um—I don't think you can do that.

LENKE. Why not?

MRS. SARKANY. Don't be so curious. You just go to bed and have a rest.

LENKE. I'd rather stay up and study. I'm positive that if I stay up and study I'll learn a few things I never knew.

MRS. SARKANY. Don't study so much. Wouldn't it be better if we were to send a barrel of wine to the professor early in the morning?

LENKE. That won't hurt.

MRS. SARKANY. Or a hundred cigars. What does the professor like?

LENKE. The professor likes presents.

MRS. SARKANY. We've given him wine once already. I wish you had never gone to that school.

LENKE. Same here.

MRS. SARKANY. The presents cost more than the tuition fees.

LENKE. That's why I say it would be best for me to study all night. Then we don't need the wine. I

want to work until morning. I'll look over the entire material.

MRS. SARKANY. What material?

LENKE. *The material.*

MRS. SARKANY. Is that a separate course?

LENKE. No. I don't think I'll have to stay up until morning. I'll be through by midnight. Everything will be perfect to-morrow. All we'll need to do is to send him the wine and the cigars.

MRS. SARKANY. What do you mean? Both? To study and to send expensive wine? What are we, anyway? Wine cellars? Or cigar stores?

LENKE. That's an ancient Hungarian custom.

MRS. SARKANY. A fine little custom. If you know algebra, you don't need wine. And if we have to send wine, what have you been doing all year?

LENKE. The professor smiles at those who send him wine.

MRS. SARKANY. Let him cry for a change.

LENKE. All right, if you want to be tight—all right. Now I'm sure I'll flunk. I know him.

MRS. SARKANY. Very well, dear, I'll send off the butler in the morning with a barrel of wine for the professor. Now run along, but don't stay up late.

LENKE. Thanks, Ella. Good night.

[*Exits.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Good night, dear. [*Alone.*] Ten o'clock. If this Lord Breeches is a punctual man—

[*Enter Csato.*]

CSATO [*carrying a small basket and a bottle of champagne*]. Madame!

MRS. SARKANY. Ah, Csato! Good evening! I was just thinking of you. Take a seat.

CSATO. Alone at last.

MRS. SARKANY. Oh, no! Neither alone, nor at last. My sister is in the next room. Sit down.

CSATO. Look, how attentive I am. This little basket here—

MRS. SARKANY... What's in it?

CSATO. Strawberries. And this bottle contains the widow of the late M. Cliquot.

MRS. SARKANY. Champagne! What attention! I am really very sorry, but I shall have to be harsh with you. For instance, not to say anything else, you are a common liar.

CSATO. But, madame!

MRS. SARKANY. Be calm. The blackmail case is a lie from beginning to end. True, it is an attempt at blackmail—but it is directed against me. You are exposed.

CSATO. You ask me to come for a cup of tea and give me cross words, instead. I thought it would be quite different. I knew there'd be no tea but . . . Who told you this, anyway?

MRS. SARKANY. No one. But my trust in you has been shaken.

CSATO. Don't shake, madame. I've come here with honorable intentions. I want to sweeten your days. I love you.

MRS. SARKANY. I don't believe you. Where are the documents?

CSATO. They are here, in my pocket.

MRS. SARKANY. Ah, so you have them! Show them to me.

CSATO. Can't you see that I love you. I love you.

MRS. SARKANY. And I love my

husband. I shouldn't say . . . a little flirtation. . . .

CSATO. Flirtation? Never!

MRS. SARKANY. And if ever I became unfaithful to my husband I'd do it out of curiosity. It ought to be quite interesting.

CSATO. It is. And how! Every woman who is worth anything, every woman whose system is just a little refined, does it at least once in her life.

MRS. SARKANY. What?

CSATO. Becomes curious. I can assure you, I've appeased more curiosity in my life than Pythia, the three-legged fortune teller.

MRS. SARKANY. I can't trust you. I always think of the blackmail case of which not a word is true.

CSATO. What I say is the truth.

MRS. SARKANY. I'll be frank with you. I've asked you to tea. And you won't even get tea.

CSATO. Not even tea?

MRS. SARKANY. No. You won't get anything at all.

CSATO. Some one is responsible for all this. You wouldn't say this without any reason at all. You love me. Admit that you love me.

MRS. SARKANY. No, I don't love you, my lord!

CSATO. I've got it! Now I know everything. It's Puzzer! He's invented this damned name for me. But he'll come to my street yet! And then I'll repay him in full, by God! Once, when we caught him, he slipped out while they were handcuffing him—and I wasn't promoted. Had I locked him up then, I'd be a captain now.

MRS. SARKANY. So the blackmail case isn't true, after all?

CSATO. No . . . That is to say,

of course it is. Everything is true.

MRS. SARKANY. Nothing is true?

CSATO. God, if I get him, I'll wring his neck. I'll break every one of his bones.

MRS. SARKANY. I like you when you are angry. You are more manly.

CSATO. Really?

MRS. SARKANY. Let me have the documents. Won't you let me have them? [*Aside.*] Just wait, my friend! [*Aloud.*] I like angry men. They interest me greatly when they reach the peak of martial manhood.

CSATO. I'll tear that scoundrel to pieces.

MRS. SARKANY. When a man's eyes shine with anger—that's the real thing! Anger and strength! That's the genuine beauty of men! Will you stay here for a while, dear?

CSATO. Dear? Of course.

MRS. SARKANY. Take off your sword, dear Csato.

CSATO. My sword? Dear Csato? All right, I'll take it off.

MRS. SARKANY. You are now like the noble beast of the desert, the angry lion.

CSATO. I'll eat him up!

MRS. SARKANY. Ah, this strength! You are right, the hyper-modern woman breaks out in me, strength hypnotizes me. . . . Your being hypnotizes me, dearest Csato.

CSATO. Dearest? Ah!!

MRS. SARKANY. There is a noble fire in your eyes, there is something terrorizing in your voice, there is wildness in your gestures. Oh, my beautiful lion! [*Points to the lion's skin on the floor.*] This, this skin would be becoming to you! Just the thing for you.

CSATO [*suspiciously*]. Aren't you trying to make fun of me, madame?

[*MRS. SARKANY, unable to suppress her mirth any longer, breaks into loud laughter and hurries out to her room.*]

CSATO. What's this? Is she laughing because I'm comical, or is this hysterical laughter? That is to say, I don't know now whether she is laughing at me, or laughingly inviting me! Anyway, I'll go after her. Her laughter sounded very hysterical to me. So I take it as an invitation. [*After short hesitation.*] I'll go to her room! [*Looks at the lion's skin.*] Shall I take this with me? No, that would be an exaggeration. [*Looks at the basket of strawberries.*] But I'll take this with me! [*Looks at the bottle of champagne.*] And this, especially! And—anger and strength! [*Steps to door. In a stentorian voice.*] Madame! [*In his ordinary tone of voice.*] The door is not closed! [*In a stentorian tone.*] Madame!

[*Turns out the light and goes into*

MRS. SARKANY'S room. Short pause. PUZSER, with a flashlight in his hands, climbs in through the window.]

PUZSER [*alone*]. For the first time in my life I feel that I am growing old. When I climbed through the window my heart was beating. And the first beating heart means to a burglar what the first gray hair does to a woman. So help me God, I am deeply moved. This familiar, cozy room—and I've come here to steal. All the furniture are old acquaintances. Hello, desk! Good evening, sofa! How reproachfully they look at me! Puzser, Puzser, you've broken into the apartment of your own lawyer. . . . But let's not be so scrupulous. A lawyer is just like any other man. A subject

for thefts. Why should he be burglar-proof? On my late word of honor, my hands are trembling, these two sure hands of mine. Courage, Puzser, you've been forced to do it. Unemployment, economic crisis, *et cetera, et cetera*. And then again, he formally persuaded me to do it. Look, here's the safe. [*Starts work on the safe.*] And how enthusiastically he will defend me in case I'm caught. "I flatly deny that said Puzser broke into my apartment on that certain night. I flatly deny that said defendant cracked my safe." God, this work's easy, but some one has already started work on it. [*Takes out a drawer through the opening he has made.*] What order! Look, his will on the top. Poor chap. [*Reading.*] "First paragraph. All my money, to my dear wife. . . . To my brother, Istvan, five thousand. . . . To my sister-in-law, Lenke. . . ." God, am I dreaming? "Fifth paragraph. To Puzser, for having made my office a flourishing enterprise, one thousand. . . ." [*In a trembling voice.*] I can't steal from this man. He even mentions me in his will. I can't, I can't! [*He is speaking with tears in his voice.*] I can't be guilty of such ungratefulness! My heart's beating, my hands are trembling, God, what has become of me? An old, sentimental fool of a burglar, that's what I am.

[*Drops the drawer, with great noise. The door opens now, Mrs. SARKANY steps out of her room.*]

MRS. SARKANY [*frightened*]. Who's there? My God, a man! Mr. Csato!

CSATO [*entering*]. What's that? What's the matter?

MRS. SARKANY. Look, there's a man standing there.

CSATO. Where?

MRS. SARKANY. Over there, leaning against the desk.

CSATO. Oh, go on. That's a piece of furniture.

MRS. SARKANY. Didn't you hear the noise? [*To PUZSER.*] Who are you? Say, who are you?

CSATO. That's no man, I tell you.

MRS. SARKANY. Turn on the light, I don't dare to.

CSATO. I do!

[*Turns on the light.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Puzser!

CSATO. Puzser! At last, you're in my hands! Puzser!

PUZSER. Well, yes. I'm Puzser. What of it?

MRS. SARKANY. But Puzser, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Can you still look me in the face? To steal here! This is more than ungratefulness, more than sin. This is arrogance.

CSATO. One needs cheek to do this, but you've got it, thank the Lord!

MRS. SARKANY. To steal from my husband who has defended you nineteen times! On the very day of the latest acquittal! What cynicism!

CSATO. I wouldn't let you go now for anything, Puzser! You've had tough luck, old man. You didn't expect to run straight into the arms of a police lieutenant, eh? Some surprise, eh?

PUZSER. For the first time in my life I am caught.

MRS. SARKANY. My God, my God! Lucky that you are here now, Csato.

CSATO [*happily*]. Puzser, I've been waiting for this moment for months.

MRS. SARKANY. The scoundrel has

found out that my husband won't be home to-night.

CSATO. But that was all! He didn't expect me here! And it's just I who am here! Just me! I'm extraordinarily happy, Puzser! You didn't expect Lord Breeches, did you? Well? Answer me.

PUZSER. No.

CSATO. You see, the Lord Breeches of whom you've made so much fun, who wasn't promoted on account of you, has the great pleasure of grabbing you by the neck and telling you that you are arrested in the name of the law.

PUZSER. That's no news to me. I hear it for the twentieth time now.

CSATO. But for the first time from my lips.

PUZSER [*steps forward. He speaks in an even, calm, determined voice*]. Lieutenant, let's finish this in a hurry. I was stupid enough to let myself be caught, now take me to the station right away.

CSATO. Just leave it to me, my friend.

[*Looks for rope.*]

PUZSER [*takes rope out of his pocket*]. Here you are.

[*CSATO ties PUZSER's hands.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Did you need this?

PUZSER. Let's go, lieutenant.

CSATO. Good night, madame! I am happy that it is I who takes Puzser to jail now.

PUZSER [*starts to go*]. Good night. I'm sorry to have disturbed the rendezvous.

MRS. SARKANY [*frightened*]. What are you saying?

PUZSER [*calmly*]. I'm sorry to have disturbed the rendezvous.

CSATO. What did you disturb?

PUZSER. The rendezvous. Let's go.

CSATO. What are you talking about?

PUZSER. Let's not make so much fuss here. Take me to the station and that's all. I was unlucky and so were you. Both of us were unlucky.

CSATO. Why was I unlucky?

PUZSER. Go on, don't try to be so innocent. Why, you've compromised a lady. That is the toughest luck that can ever befall a gentleman.

CSATO. Have you gone mad? I—I have compromised a lady?

PUZSER. Sure you have. Before the eyes of the world. And now, let's go.

[*Starts to go.*]

MRS. SARKANY. What crazy talk is this, anyway?

CSATO. Don't hurry, Puzser. Why are you in such a hurry? That's good! Don't you want to have a couple of words with me? Tell me, whom have I compromised?

PUZSER. Not me, lieutenant. Mrs. Sarkany! Or do you think that I'll shut my mouth when my case comes up? Do you think that I'll keep silent in court and not yell it out, before judges and audience, that you came out of Mrs. Sarkany's room, together with her, to arrest me? Do you think that I shall not say a word about this to my lawyer? Do you think that I am a stupid ass? Let's go, let's go, let's go.

[*Starts to go.*]

CSATO. Don't run away. God bless you, we aren't in a hurry, are we?

MRS. SARKANY. Lieutenant Csato remained within the boundaries of the most correct— This is impertinent slander!

PUZSER. You don't say so! Tell it to the judge. Let's go.

[*Starts to go.*]

MRS. SARKANY. But this is terrible!

CSATO. Please, don't be in such a hurry! I'll tell you something.

PUZSER. Doesn't interest me.

CSATO. But what shall I do? What shall I do?

MRS. SARKANY. You've put me in a frightful position! Why have you come here, anyway? Why?

PUZSER. Are we going or aren't we?

CSATO. Don't shout so much, for God's sake. You're a clever man; can't we talk sensibly for a while?

MRS. SARKANY. Come back, dear Puzser. Won't you do this for me?

PUZSER [*gruffly*]. Are we going or aren't we?

CSATO. Come here. I'll talk to him, he'll listen to me. Now listen, Puzser, you know very well that I've always loved you.

PUZSER. About as much as I've loved you.

CSATO. I've always been convinced that you are, deep down in your heart, an honest man and that only on account of bad company and the bad economic conditions . . . the financial crisis . . . I mean . . . Oh, by the way, doesn't that rope hurt you?

[*Reaches for the rope.*]

PUZSER [*pulls his hands away*]. That's all right, thank you. That's just the way I always have it.

MRS. SARKANY. If it's too tight, we have nothing against it if you—

PUZSER. Thank you. But it's just right.

CSATO. You have no idea how

much it pains me that it is just me who has found you here. But duty—

PUZSER. Oh, well, duty. . . . Let's go!

[*Starts to go.*]

MRS. SARKANY [*screaming*]. No! Don't go!

CSATO. I beg your pardon. First of all, I'm off duty now.

PUZSER. That makes no difference to me.

CSATO. And were I to say that I forgive you, just for once?

MRS. SARKANY. And were I to say the same?

PUZSER. You have no right to forgive me— I wanted to steal your husband's money! And your damned duty is to arrest me! I warn you, if you don't arrest me I'll make such a commotion that you won't forget it for years. Get me?

MRS. SARKANY. What a horrible situation! Lieutenant, I have to thank *you* for this! Shame on you!

PUZSER. Shame on you, lieutenant!

CSATO. If you feel like it, you may say Lord Breeches. I won't get angry.

PUZSER. Just for spite, "Lieutenant."

CSATO. Look here, Puzser . . . be reasonable. . . . I'll take off the rope.

[*Attempts to do so.*]

PUZSER. Take away your paws! If you touch me I'll bite you.

CSATO. And I'll take it off just the same.

[*Gets hold of him.*]

PUZSER. Let go of me! Let go of me! Leave me alone!

[*Tries to free himself.*]

MRS. SARKANY. But Puzser!

[*They take the rope off his hands.*]

PUZSER. I protest! This is nothing but brutal force! To treat thus a defenseless man! You abuse your position, you take advantage of the situation, lieutenant!

CSATO. That's all right, my boy.

MRS. SARKANY. Take a seat, my dear Puzser.

CSATO. I'll count on your gentlemanliness, old man.

PUZSER. On my gentlemanliness?

MRS. SARKANY. I, too. For, although the lieutenant acted within the boundaries of the most correct . . . I mean to say . . . we did absolutely nothing . . . it seems as if we had . . . and . . . and . . .

[*Breaks into tears.*]

PUZSER. Don't cry, madame. I can't resist female tears.

CSATO. Can I count on you?

PUZSER. You can, although I loathe you. Don't be afraid, madame. [*To CSATO.*] You were almost forced to betray your own self.

CSATO. What do you mean?

PUZSER. Look here. As a gentleman, your duty would have been to swear that you weren't here to-night. Am I right?

CSATO. Yes.

PUZSER. And, as a police official, you would have been forced to swear that you arrested me here?

CSATO. Yes.

PUZSER. Consequently, had the judge asked you where you were, you would have had to answer "no" as a gentleman and "yes" as a police lieutenant. How would you have coördinated those two things?

CSATO. I'd have said . . . I would have kept my mouth shut.

MRS. SARKANY. Dear Puzser! You're an angel.

PUZSER. You see? So don't be so cocky all the time! And when you go to a rendezvous in the future . . .

MRS. SARKANY. I beg your pardon!

PUZSER. When you go to a rendezvous in the future, dress in civilian clothes, put on false whiskers, and call yourself Jumping Jack. And when cruel fate brings a burglar into your proximity, run away.

CSATO [*aside*]. I could just wring his neck!

MRS. SARKANY. But I won't let you cast aspersions upon me.

PUZSER. Just leave that to me! [*To CSATO.*] And as far as your arrogance toward me is concerned . . .

CSATO. How dare you!

PUZSER. What! I'll shout.

CSATO. Excuse me.

PUZSER. And, as I said, because of your arrogance, you will, to render me moral satisfaction, shake hands with me.

CSATO [*aside*]. Damn you, impudent scoundrel.

[*Shakes hands with PUZSER.*]

PUZSER. You know, if I were a police lieutenant, I shouldn't shake hands with such a scoundrel.

CSATO. You've defeated me, Puzser. I surrender. You may go away and no one will ever find out you were here to-night.

MRS. SARKANY. Yes, Puzser, you may go away.

PUZSER. Go away? I am just beginning to stay.

CSATO [*aside*]. I could murder him.

MRS. SARKANY. I'll collapse.

PUZSER [*pointing to the drawer he dropped*]. First of all, pick up

those things and put them back into the drawer. Then replace the drawer in the safe. I don't like things lying around. Has nothing been left from supper? I am very hungry. A little meat?

MRS. SARKANY. No meat.

PUZSER. Fruits?

MRS. SARKANY. At the most, some strawberries.

[*Hurries out.*]

PUZSER. Let me have 'em.

CSATO [*aside*]. My beautiful strawberries. Wish he would choke on them.

[*Picks up the things and replaces the drawer.*]

PUZSER [*to CSATO*]. Hurry up, hurry up! What a lazy man!

CSATO. I've never seen any one keep so many things in one drawer.

MRS. SARKANY [*coming*]. Your strawberries, Puzser. Mr. Csato brought them.

PUZSER. Oh, that's nice. Haven't you brought a little whipped cream with it, Mr. Csato? . . . Do you wish a few?

CSATO. No, thanks, I don't want any.

PUZSER. Haven't you anything to drink? I'm thirsty. Champagne?

MRS. SARKANY. Champagne? Oh, yes, we have.

[*Starts out.*]

PUZSER. Well, bring it if you have some. [*To CSATO who is gesticulating to MRS. SARKANY not to bring the champagne.*] What's the matter with you?

CSATO. A mosquito wanted to bite me.

PUZSER. Why don't you let him, the poor thing?

CSATO [*replacing the drawer*]. And that's that.

MRS. SARKANY [*coming in*]. Here's the champagne.

CSATO [*aside*]. My wonderful champagne. I wish he'd drown in it.

PUZSER. Thanks a lot. Three glasses? That's fine. Only oxen drink alone. Well, Csato, pour the drinks, you're the youngest.

CSATO. This, too!

[*Pours outside the glass.*]

PUZSER. Take care, silly! Don't waste that noble drink. I see I have to do everything alone. Madame, to your health! [*They drink.*] And now that this has been settled, I shall be going, with your kind permission. But, unless I am mistaken, there's a raid taking place in the neighborhood to-night—am I right, lieutenant?—and if I go out in this outfit they'll grab me immediately. Just imagine what'd happen if they caught me. So I thought that it wouldn't be a bad idea to go away from here disguised as a gentleman. If you permit me—and if you don't, it makes no difference—I'll go now to Mr. Sarkany's dressing-room and put on some decent clothes. I kiss your hands, madame. [*To CSATO.*] So long, my boy!

[*Exits. CSATO and MRS. SARKANY look after him, dazed.*]

CSATO. But he shall not escape me! Scoundrel! Low-down thief! Where's my cap?

MRS. SARKANY. What do you intend to do? What do you want? Another stupidity? Wasn't all this enough for you?

CSATO. He ate my strawberries! He drank my champagne!

MRS. SARKANY. What do you want to do?

CSATO. Do you think I'll just let him get away?

MRS. SARKANY. I hope you have no brilliant ideas? Because if you have, we are lost.

CSATO. Oh! I know what I ought to do! He won't escape me again!

MRS. SARKANY. What do you want, you fool?

CSATO. I'll hurry to the nearest police station and send two men here. I'll tell them I saw a suspicious character climbing in through the window. Isn't that a good idea?

MRS. SARKANY. Excellent! And if they ask you why you didn't catch him yourself?

CSATO. That's none of their business. I'm their superior. I'll send them here right away.

MRS. SARKANY. And you?

CSATO. I'll go home.

MRS. SARKANY. And the two policemen?

CSATO. They'll come up here and grab Puzser. I assure you he will pay dearly for his impertinence.

MRS. SARKANY. So there'll be a scandal in my house! Oh, my God! My God!

CSATO. Please don't scream. I'm beginning to dislike neurasthenic women.

MRS. SARKANY. The entire household will be up. Oh, my God!

CSATO. They'll go to bed again. If I let him slip out now, I'll never become a captain. Good night.

MRS. SARKANY. Csato! Csato!

CSATO. Good night.

MRS. SARKANY. Csato, if you love me just a little bit. . . .

CSATO. Can't be done! I want to be a captain!

[Hurries out.]

MRS. SARKANY [alone]. I won't

stand for this. There'll be no scandal in my house. Puzser! [Knocks on the door.] Dear Puzser!

[PUZSER enters. He is dressed in fashionable clothes: patent leather shoes, fine shirt, well-cut trousers. He is about to tie his handsome cravat. He has no vest or jacket on.]

MRS. SARKANY. My God!

PUZSER. Don't feel embarrassed, madame.

MRS. SARKANY. For heaven's sake, Puzser, flee from here. Csato is sending policemen here. Get away.

PUZSER. Do you want to do me a great favor?

MRS. SARKANY. Of course. That's why I knocked.

PUZSER. Please tie my cravat.

MRS. SARKANY. Under the circumstances to think of nothing but your tie! Get away, man, before it is too late.

PUZSER. I haven't the slightest intention of doing so.

MRS. SARKANY. Are you crazy?

[With trembling hands, she ties his cravat.]

PUZSER. Don't be afraid. I am not afraid of the policemen. Tie it, please.

MRS. SARKANY. But what if they get you and take you away?

PUZSER. Just leave it to me. I'm the master now.

MRS. SARKANY. What?

PUZSER. Now you have to see this through, madame. I permit myself the little joke of staying here. Is it ready?

MRS. SARKANY. What do you want to do with me?

PUZSER. Don't dare think anything bad of me! That fifth para-

graph! Oh, that fifth paragraph! Now you have to endure the consequences—just because I want to take away your interest in such nocturnal adventures.

MRS. SARKANY. My God, I'm afraid of you, Puzser!

PUZSER. You needn't be. Hush! Hush! They're coming. [*The usual nervous gesture.*] The door. . . . My ears!

MRS. SARKANY. It's too late!

[*Enter Mrs. Marosi.*]

MAROSI. Good evening! . . . Heavens! Pardon me!

[*Turns around, noticing Puzser in his shirt sleeves.*]

PUZSER. Don't be afraid, Mrs. Marosi, come back.

MRS. SARKANY. What are you doing here at this hour, Mrs. Marosi?

MAROSI. I wanted to go to sleep at my aunt's. But the men were too impertinent on the street. The streets are full of mashers.

PUZSER. They wouldn't have anything to do with you.

MAROSI. Then I discovered . . . that I like this family very much. I just couldn't part with it. Something was pulling me back.

MRS. SARKANY [*aside*]. She had to come back just now.

PUZSER. Mrs. Marosi, we haven't time to explain everything. There's a thief in the house.

MAROSI [*screaming*]. A thief!

PUZSER. Don't yell. I gave the police the clew. But hurry now, go to bed, and don't mind anything that's going to happen. Hurry up. You'll find out everything in the morning. Hurry!

MAROSI. A thief, a real thief! At last!

PUZSER. Go now, go now. Go to sleep.

MAROSI. A real thief! Oh, how exciting! I'll be eavesdropping.

[*Goes out.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Fly, Puzser.

PUZSER. Never! But you retire, madame. What's going to happen, will happen. We'll manage to pull through somehow. It has never been nohow yet.

MRS. SARKANY. What a situation! And all this on account of a mere lieutenant! If only he had left the documents here!

[*Goes out.*]

PUZSER [*turns out the light*]. And let them come now! We'll see who is stronger!

[*Goes back to SARKANY's dressing room. BERTALAN enters, stealthily, in stocking feet.*]

BERTALAN. The moment has come! A damnable work, that copying. Ah, I've been waiting for this moment for months! [*Carefully knocks on LENKE's door. Whispering.*] Lenke! Lenke! It seems she's fallen asleep. [*Opens the door.*] Of course, she's sleeping. The angel! At the table, with the book before her.

LENKE [*from within*]. Oh, who is it?

BERTALAN. Huh! It's me.

LENKE. No, no, don't come in!

BERTALAN. But dearest!

[*The door opens, LENKE enters.*]

LENKE. My God. . . . Don't come in! I'll come out. . . .

BERTALAN. Just one kiss!

LENKE. If some one comes!

BERTALAN. That's just why you should hurry!

LENKE. Not on my lips! . . .

BERTALAN. That's just the place where . . .

[*Kisses her.*]

LENKE. That's enough! Enough!

BERTALAN. It isn't enough. It's never enough!

LENKE. God, some one is coming.

[*Runs away.*]

BERTALAN. You're right, some one is coming.

FIRST POLICEMAN [*from without*]. You stay outside and lock the door.

[*Two policemen enter.*]

SECOND POLICEMAN [*grabbing BERTALAN*]. Oh, sonny!

FIRST POLICEMAN. So we've got him already. This is a lucky day.

BERTALAN. Let go of me! What's this? What are you doing here?

FIRST POLICEMAN. Looking for you, my boy. Come on, hurry up.

BERTALAN. I beg pardon. . . . You oxen! I belong to the household.

SECOND POLICEMAN. Sure you do. Put on your shoes and come along.

BERTALAN. You've made a mistake. . . . Miss Lenke!

[*Enter LENKE, crying.*]

LENKE. Didn't I tell you?

BERTALAN. Identify me, please, for God's sake. I don't know what these two policemen are doing here. I am Mr. Sarkany's assistant. Bertalan Tót, law student.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Law student?

SECOND POLICEMAN. You belong to the office? Then what are you doing here in the darkness in stock-in feet?

LENKE. God, what's going to happen to me?

[*At this moment, the door of the dressing room opens and*

PUZSER enters. He is fully dressed, very elegantly. Light

gloves, top-hat. He talks in a fresh, commanding tone.]

PUZSER. What's this? Who's there? Policemen?

BERTALAN [*whispering, surprised*]. Mr. Puzser!

PUZSER [*whispers*]. Shut up! I am Sarkany, the lawyer. [*Aloud.*] Have you been sent over here by Lieutenant Csato?

POLICEMEN. Yes, sir.

PUZSER. What do you want of my assistant? Why did you catch him? I have seen many stupid policemen in my life, but never two such asses as you two.

BERTALAN. Thank you.

PUZSER. This is my room, you won't find anything or anybody here. The thief is either on the roof or in the cellar. Or he is hiding in the garden. Have you left some one outside?

FIRST POLICEMAN [*saluting*]. There are two men outside, sir.

PUZSER. Very well. From the hall, a staircase leads to the roof. That's the place where you have to look. What do you want here? Why didn't you grab me?

SECOND POLICEMAN. That would have been fine, wouldn't it?

FIRST POLICEMAN. There's no shrewder man than the burglar, sir.

PUZSER. You tell me that? Now, get out of here. One of you should go upstairs, the other one should wait at the foot of the stairs. I loathe you.

[*POLICEMEN salute and exit.*]

BERTALAN. Thank you, Mr. Puzser. But how did you get here?

PUZSER. Don't cross-question me, sonny! . . . There's a thief in the house.

LENKE. A thief?

PUZSER. Go to bed now, children.

I tell you, you've picked a fine time for a rendezvous.

LENKE. For God's sake, Mr. Puzser, you won't betray us, will you? Can I count on your gentlemanliness?

PUZSER. Everybody has something to do with my gentlemanliness! I am beginning to believe that I am the first gentleman of Budapest.

BERTALAN. You won't say anything, will you?

PUZSER. No, sonny. I've told you I'm the friend of lovers.

LENKE. But if they find out that I met Bertalan here, I'm through! I am a lost woman.

PUZSER. Don't be afraid, little girl, as long as you see me. Nothing will happen. Everything is all right. You just go to bed.

LENKE. Mr. Puzser, you are the darlinest man on earth.

PUZSER. I've known that for some time.

BERTALAN. Mr. Puzser . . . accept my gratitude.

PUZSER. You keep your mouth shut. And don't do such things again—or you won't get away so easily. Damn it!

LENKE. Thank you, Mr. Puzser. [*Disappears in her room.*]

PUZSER [*to* BERTALAN]. Ass! What stupidity, to make dates here in the house, in the dark of the night! Can't you wait until you marry her?

BERTALAN. I beg your pardon, Mr. Puzser, but I acted within the boundaries of the most correct . . .

PUZSER. Everybody is telling me the same thing to-night! And what would you have done if, instead of me, Mrs. Sarkany had come in?

BERTALAN. Impossible! She is sleeping now.

PUZSER. Are you so sure of that?

BERTALAN. I'd bet any money.

[*Enter* MRS. SARKANY.]

MRS. SARKANY. What's that? What's going on here?

PUZSER. Don't bet, sonny.

BERTALAN. There!

MRS. SARKANY. Who's this? Bertalan? What are you doing here, Bertalan?

BERTALAN. I was copying.

MRS. SARKANY. And that's why you've taken off your shoes? Are you copying with your feet?

BERTALAN. No, on the contrary.

MRS. SARKANY. Then what are you doing here in stocking feet? Bertalan, no—but I wouldn't even think of that!

BERTALAN. I beg your pardon, but I—

MRS. SARKANY. Bertalan!

PUZSER. Well, Berty, there's nothing left but to confess everything . . .

MRS. SARKANY. What has he to confess?

BERTALAN. Nothing! Nothing!

[*He is signaling* PUZSER *not to talk.*]

PUZSER. Why are you pulling my jacket? Nothing helps you now. And if you are so ashamed of it, I'll confess it for you.

MRS. SARKANY. Great God . . . so my suspicions were right.

PUZSER. Yes, madame, it's love!

BERTALAN. It's a lie, Puzser! That man is mad!

PUZSER. We'll confess everything. But so that you shouldn't suspect an innocent one—

[*Whispers something in* MRS. SARKANY'S *ear.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Mrs. Marosi? The venerable Mrs. Marosi?

PUZSER. Yes, madame. I came into the room just when he wanted to go to her.

BERTALAN. That's a lie.

PUZSER. Don't deny it, you nice little donkey. I saw you opening her door.

MRS. SARKANY. Well, Bertalan, your love affairs are quite extraordinary.

PUZSER. Well, youth desires maturity! I was just like him when I was young.

MRS. SARKANY. So that's why you were always quarreling? Shame on you, Bertalan!

BERTALAN. What shall I do? . . . I couldn't help it. . . . She seduced me . . . and then she was begging me . . .

MRS. SARKANY. Mrs. Marosi? I always suspected that . . .

PUZSER. Grandma's baby!

MRS. SARKANY. What a taste!

PUZSER. If you continue like this, some day you'll have an affair with a mummy.

[MRS. MAROSI *sticks her head in through a slightly opened door.*]

MRS. SARKANY. There she is, she's looking for him already! Come here, here he is! We've just caught him!

[*Enter Mrs. MAROSI, in night-gown.*]

MAROSI [*screaming*]. The thief?

PUZSER. Don't act the innocent. You were waiting for him.

MAROSI. To tell you the truth, that's just why I didn't go to bed. . . . Ah, my heart is beating like—

MRS. SARKANY. And you confess it? Aren't you ashamed of it?

MAROSI. Why should I be ashamed

of it? I've been reading a detective novel and it's made me very nervous.

MRS. SARKANY. What cynicism!

PUZSER. I don't like to say such things, but this is a desperate woman. Thank God I caught him just when he wanted to go to you.

MAROSI. To me? That would have been very interesting.

PUZSER. I should think so! I should like to have been there myself!

MRS. SARKANY. Mrs. Marosi! At last I see you in your true moral nakedness. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

MAROSI. Haven't I told you already that I am not! Why should I be? After all, I am curious, and I don't want to miss one single opportunity to—

MRS. SARKANY. Don't continue!

MAROSI. I haven't in all my life yet seen how a real burg—

PUZSER. Stop! It seems the great excitement has robbed you of your senses.

MAROSI. I don't deny that I am excited. Indeed, an old lady like myself, rarely has a chance to have a life—

MRS. SARKANY. What disappointment! Oh, Mrs. Marosi! And what disappointment, oh, Bertalan!

MRS. MAROSI. So it was Bertalan? Ah!

BERTALAN. I confess it was I.

MAROSI. You were the thief?

PUZSER. Who talks of thieves here? How can you suspect your darling?

MRS. SARKANY. Your dove?

MAROSI. My darling? My dove? What are you saying?

MRS. SARKANY. Bertalan has confessed everything.

PUZSER. He had to!

BERTALAN. I had to, my angel!

MAROSI. My angel—your grandfather!

BERTALAN. Don't pout, dearest. Confess that it is the glory of my love that gilds the twilight of your years.

PUZSER. Let's not talk so much! Take each other!

BERTALAN. Dearest! Dearest!

[*Throws open his arms.*]

MAROSI. But . . . but . . . Puzser . . . Mr. Puzser! I count on your gentlemanliness!

PUZSER [*angrily*]. Let my gentlemanliness go!

MAROSI. I won't stay here another minute!

[*Hurries out, in despair.*]

BERTALAN. You are not going alone! I am going with you, angel! To the end of the world, my dove!

[*Hurries out after her.*]

MRS. SARKANY. I should never have thought this of the woman.

PUZSER. There are such disappointments.

[*FIRST POLICEMAN enters, salutes.*]

FIRST POLICEMAN. Mr. Sarkany, I think we've caught the real one now.

PUZSER. I don't think so.

FIRST POLICEMAN. A suspicious figure is stealing toward the house . . . and I've come to ask you to darken the room here because otherwise he might become frightened. And that you and your wife please leave this room.

PUZSER. My wife, too?

FIRST POLICEMAN. Yes, sir.

MRS. SARKANY. His wife!

PUZSER. Very well. My wife is easily frightened, anyway. Uncle

policeman is right, go to your room, my sweet.

MRS. SARKANY. His sweet!

PUZSER. Go and lie down, dearest, I am coming in a few seconds.

MRS. SARKANY. That's all I need!

FIRST POLICEMAN. Please, turn out the light, he won't dare to enter if he sees light here.

PUZSER [*with his hand on the switch*]. Well, go, my rose. I'm coming in a minute, don't get impatient.

MRS. SARKANY. What a situation!

PUZSER. Don't you think it would be best if I hid myself? I'll step out only when I have to.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Yes, I think so.

PUZSER [*whispering to Mrs. SARKANY*]. You know who is coming? Your husband! I tell you it is he. I've stolen his wallet and that's why he is coming. . . . But now you go . . . [*Aloud.*] Go, dear, hurry . . .

MRS. SARKANY. I don't understand a word of anything.

[*Goes out.*]

PUZSER. Well, I'm going to turn out the lights now.

FIRST POLICEMAN. And I'll hide in the hall.

[*Enter CSERESNYES, in tuxedo. He is drunk.*]

CSERESNYES. 'Devening!

FIRST POLICEMAN. Is this the thief?

PUZSER. What does he want here?

CSERESNYES. Jozsi! . . . I haven't seen you for ages. Jozsi, but you've changed! Come, my boy, the class is waiting! And all the professors. *Royal*, room number four. Come, Jozsi. My, but you've changed!

PUZSER. You've changed, too, old

man. [*To POLICEMAN.*] This is no thief, he is a good friend of mine. You just hide in the hall.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*]

PUZSER [*to CSERESNYES*]. All right, old man, I'm coming in a second. [*Aside.*] Why shouldn't I meet them after ten years, anyway?

CSERESNYES. Don't miss the reunion, old pal, all the professors are there.

PUZSER. Very well, brother, I'll be there in a few minutes. But I've something to attend to here first.

CSERESNYES. I don't care, but come over surely. If you won't come, so help me God, I'll come over again and fetch you. Well, good night.

[*Exit.*]

PUZSER. So long!

[*Hears some noise from without.*

Turns out the light and hurriedly withdraws to the dressing room. SARKANY climbs in through the window.]

SARKANY. Thank God, no one is up! Oh, but I am absent-minded! I knew I forgot something . . . and, that's my luck, the most important thing . . . my papers. Fortunately, it isn't too late yet, I still have time to hurry back . . . to that dirty little café. . . . The police will be there in fifteen minutes. . . . What a funny feeling, to run away from the threshold of fame! . . . But where in the devil is my wallet? It was right here, on the desk. Where did I put it? Perhaps it's here . . .

[*Searches for his wallet in the dark. The two policemen tip-toe into the room. The First One grabs SARKANY by the neck.*]

FIRST POLICEMAN [*triumphantly*]. I've got 'im!

SECOND POLICEMAN [*gets hold of him, too*]. At last! We've got you now!

[*SARKANY, in his surprise, sits down on the floor.*]

SARKANY. What's this? Who are you? What do you want?

FIRST POLICEMAN. We want you, Mr. Burglar.

SECOND POLICEMAN. Come on, get up.

SARKANY. Are you crazy? What are you doing here? What do you want of me?

FIRST POLICEMAN. I expect you to say that you belong to the household, too.

SARKANY. You'll be surprised—I do.

FIRST POLICEMAN. I told you so!

SARKANY. Mad fool! I am the owner of this place! My name is Sarkany, I am a lawyer. [*The policemen laugh.*] This is my apartment.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Yours, too? This apartment, it seems, is everybody's. Come on.

SARKANY. Where to?

SECOND POLICEMAN. To jail, to jail!

SARKANY [*frightened*]. Wait a minute! Stop! I'll identify myself! Ella! Ella! Help!

[*Enter PUZSER.*]

PUZSER. What's this? What's going on here? Am I sleeping or am I awake? Is that you, Puzser?

SARKANY. Puzser, how did you get here?

PUZSER. Puzser! You miserable, ungrateful man!

SARKANY. I'm going mad! What's this? What's this?

FIRST POLICEMAN. Don't yell!

SECOND POLICEMAN. Shut up!

PUZSER. You scoundrel! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? How dare you? To break into my apartment! You wanted to steal from me?

SARKANY. Great heavens!

[*He is tearing his hair.*]

PUZSER. How dare you break into the house of your own lawyer? Into the house of your greatest benefactor! Have you lost all human characteristics, Puzser? Is this gratitude for having defended you nineteen times in court? Puzser, you are the meanest, most impertinent scoundrel on earth!

SARKANY. If you say another word, I'll go crazy.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

SECOND POLICEMAN. Your own lawyer! Fie!

PUZSER. Fie and a hundred times fie! Brutus, compared to you, is a model of filial affection. Puzser, I'll strike the fifth paragraph out of my will. You won't get a copper!

SARKANY [*yelling*]. Insane asylum! Insane asylum! I am mad!

PUZSER. Go ahead and yell! I know your tricks!

FIRST POLICEMAN. And he dared to say that he was you, the lawyer.

PUZSER. He dared to say this, in my own apartment?

SARKANY. Insane asylum! Let go of me! This man here is not Sarkany but—

PUZSER. The next thing he will say will be that I am Puzser.

FIRST POLICEMAN. You never can tell! He's liable to say that. After all, he says he's you!

SARKANY [*yelling*]. Puzser; yes, he is Puzser!

PUZSER. I'm sorry for you, Puzser. Take him away, take him away, boys, my heart is breaking! Take him away!

FIRST POLICEMAN. Let's go.

SARKANY. What's going to happen to me? Help! Ella! Ella!

[*Enter Mrs. SARKANY.*]

MRS. SARKANY. What's all this yelling? Oh, Jozsi!

PUZSER. Don't get excited, angel! Just imagine, but don't get nervous. . . . Puzser broke into our house!

MRS. SARKANY. Jozsi!

SARKANY. Hihihihihihih! Insane asylum! What's this? Hihihihih! Ella! Ella!

PUZSER. Don't hurt him! Although he would deserve everything.

[*Takes her by the hand.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Let me go!

PUZSER. No, my dear! Calm yourself! Suppress your wrath! Just go back to your room and lie down nicely in your little bed. I'll be coming along presently! Take him away! Take him away!

[*The policemen are dragging SARKANY out of the room.*]

MRS. SARKANY. I am fainting!

SARKANY. Insane asylum!

PUZSER. Take him, or my heart will break!

[*The policemen take away the yelling, kicking SARKANY. Mrs. MAROSI enters and utters a scream.*]

MRS. SARKANY [*fainting*]. Ah, I can't stand this. . . . Water . . . water! . . .

PUZSER. Don't scream so much! Hurry up and bring some water!

MAROSI. I will, I will! Great God!

[*Hurries out. Mrs. SARKANY is sitting motionless on a chair.*]

PUZZER [*with SARKANY's fashionable overcoat on his arm and his top-hat on his head, goes toward the door*]. And now I'm going to the

reunion . . . for a couple of hours . . . for a couple of watches!

[*Disappears, whistling merrily.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[*SCENE: The same. TIME: The next morning. AT RISE: MRS. SARKANY is having her breakfast.*]

CHAMBERMAID. Here's the ham, ma'am.

MRS. SARKANY. All right, put it down. Mr. Sarkany hasn't come home yet?

CHAMBERMAID. Not yet, ma'am. And Mr. Sarkany hasn't been out all night long in all his life. I found his bed the way I'd left it last night.

MRS. SARKANY. Is Mr. Bertalan at home?

CHAMBERMAID. He isn't home, either, ma'am. He said he was going to court.

MRS. SARKANY. That's all, Julie; you may go.

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, ma'am, but there's a gentleman in the hall. He has been waiting for Mr. Sarkany for an hour. He says he must speak to him at all costs.

MRS. SARKANY. What's his name?

CHAMBERMAID. If I remember well, something like Cseresnyes.

MRS. SARKANY [*rising*]. Cseresnyes? The same man who was here last night?

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. SARKANY [*excitedly*]. Ask him to come in at once.

CHAMBERMAID. But I daren't wake him. He's asleep.

MRS. SARKANY. Wake him up at once. I want to speak to him.

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, ma'am.

[*Exit.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Now I'll find out whether he has been to the reunion! Ah, if he deceived me . . . !

CHAMBERMAID'S VOICE [*from without*]. Hey! Hey! Mister! Wake up!

CSERESNYES [*is snoring loudly*].

CHAMBERMAID'S VOICE. Hey! Wake up, please!

CSERESNYES' VOICE. Who is it? What's that?

MRS. SARKANY [*goes to door in rear*]. Come in, dear Mr. Cseresnyes.

[*Enter CSERESNYES.*]

CSERESNYES. Good morning. Have I the pleasure of meeting Mrs. Sarkany?

MRS. SARKANY [*sits in armchair*]. I am she. What can I do?

CSERESNYES [*sits on sofa*]. I've been waiting for Jozsi for an hour, and I fell asleep. . . . Haven't slept a wink all night long, you know. You see, we were all drunk. Jozsi, too.

MRS. SARKANY. My husband? So he was there?

CSERESNYES. He didn't come, but I made him come. . . . I came over here and fetched him.

MRS. SARKANY. You did? Here? Last night?

CSERESNYES. If you please, ma'am, I was a little . . . a little inebriated by that time. . . . I don't quite know just how it happened.

MRS. SARKANY. And you found my husband here?

CSERESNYES. Yes, ma'am. You see, I got . . . inebriated because there's only one reunion in every ten years.

MRS. SARKANY. I fear the worst. And then?

CSERESNYES. Well, I'll tell you something. Jozsi has changed very much in ten years. The professors said so, too. I never thought one could change so much in ten years.

MRS. SARKANY [*aside*]. The fool took Puzser with him. [*Loud.*] And then?

CSERESNYES [*laughing*]. You see, he's become a funny fellow. Much funnier than I thought he would. He played a joke on all of us. He has a dexterous hand, damn him, and on the way to the banquet he stole my gold watch out of my pocket.

MRS. SARKANY. Unheard of!

CSERESNYES. It isn't unheard of at all! It was just a joke. He'll give it back. He stole other watches, too. The watches of the professor of geography and of the principal. From the principal he took the chain also. Well, he was drunk, that's all.

MRS. SARKANY. And now you've come—

CSERESNYES. To get them back. It was a good joke, we laughed a lot in the Turkish bath in the morning. The maid says he hasn't come home yet.

MRS. SARKANY. No, he hasn't.

CSERESNYES. I know, ma'am, I know. He went away with another friend of ours to continue the night a little longer. I bet anything, he has stolen something from him, also.

And that fellow had two thousand in his wallet.

MRS. SARKANY. Terrible! Well, we can't do anything now. Please wait till he comes home. He should be back any minute now. He's never been out this long. Did you have a good time?

CSERESNYES [*is snoring*].

MRS. SARKANY. What is it?

CSERESNYES [*snores*].

MRS. SARKANY. This is all I need! At night, policemen arrest my husband and take him away; Puzser, in my husband's name, steals the watches of the faculty; and in the morning, strangers come here and snore my house full. [*Contemptuously.*] Old drunkard. [*Shrugs her shoulders.*] What do I care? Sleep here as long as you want.

[*Exits. For a few minutes, CSERESNYES is left alone on the stage. He is snoring loudly. Then PUZSER enters, in his real clothes.*]

PUZSER. Good morning, everybody. [*Hears snoring.*] What's that? Who's sleeping here? Look, Cseresnyes! Well, he's certainly fast asleep. And there's only one method of waking up a snorer. [*Sits down.*] I'll beat him at snoring!

[*Begins to snore.*]

CSERESNYES. What's that? Who's exaggerating it here?

PUZSER. Who's this? Why can't you let me sleep in peace?

CSERESNYES. Look, Jozsi! Hello, Jozsi! Hahahaha.

PUZSER. What Jozsi? What are you talking about? I don't know you.

CSERESNYES. That's good. Hahahaha! [*Short pause.*] Hello, Jozsi. Give me back my watch.

PUZSER. Your watch? Are you

drunk? What Jozsi are you talking about?

CSERESNYES. Hahaha! Hello, Jozsi.

PUZSER. You seem to be drunk, sir. My name is Janos. Janos Puzser—and not Jozsi Puzser.

CSERESNYES. Aren't you Jozsi Sarkany?

PUZSER. No, I am not. And, anyway how dare you be so familiar with me?

CSERESNYES. That's good! Well, we sat next to each other in school thirteen years ago. Hahaha! But let's put an end to the jokes. I have to go home in a couple of hours; my train leaves at noon; give me back my watch.

PUZSER. I repeat once more: my name is Janos Puzser and I don't know you, sir. I am one of the clients of Mr. Sarkany and I am waiting for him.

CSERESNYES. Aren't you he?

PUZSER. Not at all. He isn't at home.

CSERESNYES. Well, weren't you with us last night in room number four at the Royal? Didn't you steal my watch?

PUZSER. Have you gone crazy, sir? My dear snorer, you seem to be laboring under a delusion.

CSERESNYES. Weren't you the one who proposed the toast to friendship and didn't you vow in the name of all of us that we would meet again in ten years?

PUZSER. Perhaps it was Mr. Sarkany? We look very much alike.

CSERESNYES. Really?

PUZSER. Yes, his nose is also in the center of his face.

CSERESNYES [*still not convinced*]. Then . . . I beg your pardon, sir . . . then . . . [*Staring at PUZSER.*]

LIB.
But . . . but . . . [*Sweetly, still hoping that PUZSER is merely joking.*] Hello, Jozsi!

PUZSER [*rises*]. Don't hello so much! Didn't I tell you that my name is—

BERTALAN [*enters*]. Good morning, Mr. Puzser.

PUZSER. Now you've heard my name.

CSERESNYES [*to BERTALAN*]. Isn't this gentleman Mr. Sarkany?

BERTALAN. Why, don't you know him? You, his own schoolmate?

CSERESNYES. Hell, I must have been pretty drunk last night.

PUZSER. You were.

CSERESNYES. Excuse me, please, will you? [*To BERTALAN.*] I'm going back to my hotel to change clothes because my train leaves at noon. But before I depart, I'll come back once more because I want to speak with Jozsi. Please tell him that. Good-bye.

BERTALAN. Good-bye, sir.

CSERESNYES [*looks at PUZSER, smiling*]. Hello, Jozsi! No? Really not? Pard' me. Good-bye.

[*Exits. Short pause.*]

BERTALAN. Well, Puzser, we are in for it. What's going to happen to us?

PUZSER. Just leave it to me, young man. This isn't so bad at all.

BERTALAN. Mr. Sarkany was taken away by policemen last night. Where did he come from? Why was he arrested? Where did he get his clothes?

PUZSER. Don't ask so much. Questions remind me of courts. Now listen, you just do as I tell you. And now, here's a job for you. That damned fellow served a summons on me this morning. Here. [*Gives BERTALAN the summons.*]

BERTALAN. What damned fellow?

PUZSER. The guy who sold me my burglar's tools. Monthly payments. The last time I bought a safe-cracking outfit from him, and now he is suing me for the balance. He claims the balance has become due and payable at once.

BERTALAN. Well, it seems you will have to pay.

PUZSER. Don't I know that? I don't need a lawyer to tell me that. But here's an interesting legal question for you. According to the law, they cannot take away the tools you need in order to earn your daily bread. Now then, this safe-cracking outfit . . . Well, you see . . . I earn my daily bread. . . .

BERTALAN. A most interesting question. I'll bring it up at the next meeting of the Bar Association. Let's wait now until they make the next move. Ah, Mr. Puzser, I'm so excited. Lenke is just taking her exams.

PUZSER. Are you afraid she'll flunk?

BERTALAN. Yes, I am. Because, if she does not, I'll ask Mr. Sarkany for her hand right away. This afternoon.

PUZSER. He won't be in good humor to-day. Wait a while. You see, you will have to get out of the Mrs. Marosi case first.

BERTALAN. By God, I hadn't thought of that.

PUZSER. You see! But leave it to me, I'll fix it up for you. I am a friend of all lovers.

BERTALAN. Thank you, Mr. Puzser.

PUZSER. Don't thank me. But if you want to express your gratitude, donate something toward the estab-

lishment of the Lombroso monument. . . .

BERTALAN. What for?

PUZSER. We have a little club in the city. . . . And now we are going to have a Lombroso monument, the famous criminologist. . . . You see that man did so much for us. . . .

BERTALAN [*gives him money*]. But put me down as "Anonymous."

PUZSER. Anonymous? Then I won't even put you down.

[*Pockets the money.*]

BERTALAN. That's funny. Mr. Sarkany isn't home yet. And I can't wait for him any longer because I have to go to court. When he comes, tell him, please, that I've gone to the Csongrady trial. What time is it?

PUZSER [*pulls out a gold watch*]. Three minutes past ten.

[*Examines the watch with evident delight.*]

BERTALAN. Only ten? Are you sure?

PUZSER. Guess so. But wait a minute. [*Pulls out another gold watch.*] Quarter past.

BERTALAN. You are pretty well fixed up, Mr. Puzser.

PUZSER. Well, these are the rewards of virtue!

BERTALAN. Good-bye.

[*Goes away.*]

PUZSER. 'Bye. [*Alone.*] And now I have to straighten out this mess. That fifth paragraph! . . . A nice fellow he is! What a kind heart he has! But, God is my witness, I couldn't do anything else last night.

[*Enter CHAMBERMAID.*]

CHAMBERMAID. Lieutenant Csato.

PUZSER. Hurrah! Let him in.

CHAMBERMAID. If you please, lieutenant.

[*Exits. Enter CSATO.*]

CSATO. Good morning!

PUZSER. Hello, brother!

CSATO. Are you here again? What are you doing here? How did you get here?

PUZSER. Street car.

CSATO [*angrily*]. Where were you last night?

PUZSER. Where could I have been? At the banquet.

CSATO. And the policemen I sent here—

PUZSER. They were just plain fools. They saluted me.

CSATO. Saluted?

PUZSER. Yes. And since there was no other way of settling the question, I ordered them to take Mr. Sarkany with them.

CSATO. I don't understand this at all. . . . You are free and Mr. Sarkany—

PUZSER. He is in jail. I told you you'd sent fools. Pick your men more carefully the next time.

CSATO. You scoundrel! You bandit! What did you do?

PUZSER. Hey, listen. Don't yell so much. You aren't at home.

CSATO. How is it that you are free when I've just received a report that you were arrested while trying to open the safe here?

PUZSER. You will find out everything in due time.

CSATO. This is simply terrible! Every time the promotions are around the corner you escape me. Am I never going to be a captain?

PUZSER. Not if I can help it! I loathe you.

CSATO. Well, well . . . I really don't know what I shall do with you! You are the devil himself. You, you—

PUZSER. Don't yell. [*Hurries to*

door in rear.] I hear Mr. Sarkany's voice. [*After a second's pause.*] Yes, that's him. Now you are going to hear a few words, my friend.

CSATO. Guess I'd better be going.

PUZSER. Nothing doing! You will stay right where you are. [*Blocks his way.*] We have to explain it to him somehow.

[*Enter SARKANY. He is dirty, his clothes are torn. His face is full of blue marks.*]

CHAMBERMAID [*enters right after SARKANY*]. My God, Mr. Sarkany!

SARKANY [*angrily*]. Go to hell! Why are you crying? Ah, here you are, you scoundrel!

[*Hurries toward CSATO.*]

PUZSER. Serves him right.

SARKANY. So you are here, too, you Beelzebub.

[*PUZSER hides himself behind the sofa.*]

CSATO. What's all this?

SARKANY. What? So that's your game! So you want to sneak into my house at night? You want to seduce my wife! You send policemen here to arrest me and drag me away so that you can have the house all for yourself! You want to ruin my family life with police assistance! You take foul advantage of your power! And you want to become a captain, eh? Well, I will fire you, I'll kick you out, I'll lock you up!

CSATO. What are you talking about?

PUZSER. He talks all right!

CSATO. If I weren't considering everything at stake I should beat you now . . . but you are the victim of gross misunderstandings! You poor man! I'll explain everything!

SARKANY. You will explain nothing! I know everything! But you

shall fight a duel with me and I will cut your skull into two.

PUZSER [*applauds* SARKANY's speech].

CSATO. Calm yourself, you poor man! Can't you see I don't answer your insults? I know you will beg my pardon for all of them.

SARKANY. There will be no pardons! Get out of here! I'm expecting your seconds! There will be order in this house at last.

CSATO [*yelling*]. Understand, you fool, you are the victim of a terrible misunderstanding.

SARKANY. Misunderstanding? Two policemen drag me away from my own house; they beat me black and blue on the street and lock me up at the station; I spend the night on water and bread in a stinking cellar, among drunkards, rascals, and gunmen . . . And he tells me—misunderstanding! I'll teach you how to misunderstand in the future! Get out of here!

CSATO. Is this the famous Hungarian hospitality?

SARKANY. There's no Hungarian hospitality! Get out!

PUZSER [*at the top of his voice*]. Get out!

CSATO. I don't care, but I warn you, you are committing suicide! I go, but I don't mind! You will regret it!

[*Goes toward door.*]

SARKANY. I will not regret it! Good-bye! I'll create order in this house!

[*Exit CSATO.*]

SARKANY [*sinks into an armchair*]. This is terrible, this. . . . The peace of my house . . . my honor . . . my reputation . . . gone forever. . . .

[*Breaks into tears.*]

PUZSER [*breaking into tears*]. Don't cry, Mr. Sarkany, for I have to cry with you.

SARKANY [*leaps to his feet*]. You are still here, Beelzebub? Come here! What did you do to me? Explain everything or else I'll lock you up and hang you! Come here!

PUZSER. You will not slap me in the face?

SARKANY. No. Come here and talk.

PUZSER. I just ask you, though it's no use. I won't challenge you to a duel even if you do slap me in the face.

[*Comes out of his hiding-place.*]

SARKANY. What happened here last night? What did you do to me? What was this insane asylum? Explain everything because I don't understand a single word. Talk!

PUZSER. All right, all right, I'll talk.

SARKANY. Come here.

PUZSER. But no slaps.

SARKANY. Talk! Talk!

PUZSER. First of all, it is my duty to inform you that Csato is wholly innocent.

SARKANY. Innocent? Why didn't you tell me this before—

PUZSER. Because I hoped you'd beat him up! You are responsible for everything.

SARKANY. Hahaha! I?

PUZSER. Yes, you! If you weren't a climber, if you weren't suffering from megalomania, you wouldn't have gone out in disguise.

SARKANY. And?

PUZSER. And in that case, I wouldn't have been tempted to come here unannounced at night. I told you that I was preparing an adven-

ture, didn't I? Well, that was it! I told you it would be sensational!

SARKANY. Unheard of!

PUZSER. Don't play the innocent! Don't you remember how gently you asked me whether I had prepared it carefully?

SARKANY. I didn't know it was my own house!

PUZSER. To be quite frank with you, there was a moment when I gave up the idea completely. But you persuaded me to do it. And then I came here and whom did I find here?

SARKANY. The lieutenant!

PUZSER. You've hit it. But don't think of anything wrong. He was looking for you, he wanted to inform you of a great blackmail case. He even brought the documents with him. When he saw me, he sent for policemen.

SARKANY. Why didn't he arrest you himself?

PUZSER. Because he is a gentleman and he didn't want to be misunderstood . . . a lady all alone and the night dark and silent. . . . He is a tactful gentleman. And you wanted to beat him up.

SARKANY. Why didn't you enlighten me?

PUZSER. Because I sort of liked it. But let's continue. Before the policemen arrived, I changed clothes. And when you came I thought it would be wiser if they took you instead of me because you would get out in the morning and I wouldn't be freed in less than two years. Please take that into consideration.

SARKANY. Beelzebub!

PUZSER. And consider the great excitement you caused! Don't forget that you put me into a most terrible

situation. You are the cause of everything. Chance takes the thief. You took the chance. Consequently, you are the grandfather of this burglary.

SARKANY. What a relationship!

PUZSER. If you had wanted to achieve fame by ordinary methods, nothing would have happened. But you were after publicity, you tried to force fate, you were climbing! You are not a lawyer, you are a shyster! I despise you.

SARKANY. You've never been so impertinent in all your life, Puzser! Puzser, you surpass your own self!

PUZSER. How dare you say this? Weren't you the one who tempted me, who threw me into the whirlpool? I'll teach you to talk to me in this fashion!

SARKANY. Puzser, you are the freshest man who ever lived.

PUZSER. I call you to order for this. On the other hand, donate a small sum toward the establishment of Lombroso's statue. I am the chairman of the committee.

SARKANY. Get out of here.

[Enter MRS. SARKANY.]

MRS. SARKANY. Jozsi! [*Embraces him.*] What clothes are these?

PUZSER. Don't ask.

SARKANY. Don't touch me! So you entertain police lieutenants at night, eh?

MRS. SARKANY. It isn't true! It's a lie!

PUZSER. Don't deny it, madame. I confessed everything.

SARKANY. I know everything.

PUZSER. I confessed that the lieutenant brought some documents with him and that he had managed to get the great blackmail case for Mr. Sarkany's office. You may talk freely. I told him that although it may not

seem so, nothing had gone wrong. I was the chaperon.

SARKANY. Didn't I command you to throw him out?

PUZSER. Why should we throw him out when he brings us a good customer?

SARKANY. Didn't I tell you not to let him in?

PUZSER. Pish! The lieutenant was full of good will.

MRS. SARKANY. He brought the documents with him.

SARKANY. Well, let's see them.

MRS. SARKANY. In the great excitement, he took them back again.

SARKANY. And why didn't you come to my aid? You left me alone, you let them drag me away. Why? They took me away from my own house!

PUZSER. Don't torture her! Didn't you see that she fainted? She didn't know what was happening. You are responsible for everything.

SARKANY. You keep your mouth shut. Nobody's asked you.

PUZSER. You're the cause of everything, and yet you dare reproach your wife! How dare you call me names! The lieutenant—thank God—

MRS. SARKANY [*frightened*]. The lieutenant—did he hurt him?

PUZSER. Not the way I should have liked to. But, to be truthful, he was innocent this time. He wanted to help you.

MRS. SARKANY. What clothes!

SARKANY. Yes, my dear! I mixed with burglars in order to expose the police in order to strengthen my fame in order to shed more glory upon you! And where is the gratitude? Where are the thanks?

MRS. SARKANY. So you weren't at the reunion?

SARKANY. I wish I had been! I spent the night in a dirty cell! The policemen shook me as if I had been a bottle of medicine before using.

PUZSER. Lecture about it!

SARKANY. And, in the meantime, Brutus broke into my house and Messalina staged an orgy with a regiment of mounted policemen.

CHAMBERMAID [*entering*]. Lieutenant Csato.

SARKANY. What does he want? Let him in! I hope I'll be able to control myself.

MRS. SARKANY. Jozsi, please!

PUZSER. Why do you calm him?

[*Enter CSATO.*]

CSATO. Madame! Sir! I cannot tolerate that the name of an innocent and respectable lady should be besmirched in any way! I do hope you are calmer now. [*Gives him documents.*] Here! Despite the fact that my position is at stake, I have brought you the documents. I want to prove to you that I came here last night for no selfish reason, but for your sake. Here are the papers. I spoke to the leader about you and he will be here some time to-day to ask you to defend him.

PUZSER. You see! Didn't I tell you my friend was innocent?

SARKANY. I really don't know what to do now. . . . If this is true . . . I am at the service of your seconds, but I beg *your* pardon.

CSATO. I don't care. My seconds will be here after lunch. What I did was nothing but what any gentleman would have done in my shoes, when the fair name of a lady was at stake. Good-bye. Madame!

[*Exits.*]

PUZSER. So long!

SARKANY. I am ashamed of myself.

MRS. SARKANY. The lieutenant is a gentleman. I always said so. Shame on you.

PUZSER. Let him alone. Can't you see he is already ashamed of himself?

MRS. SARKANY. You are the cause of everything! You were responsible for the whole mix-up! And I am the wife of this man! I simply can't look you in the eye. And he calls me a Messalina! Shame on you!

[Exits.]

PUZSER. And he calls me a Brutus! You deserve to be deserted by all decent people.

[Exits.]

SARKANY. There! If he isn't the limit! The family's peace is over! My office is ruined! Everybody leaves me and, perhaps, they are right. . . . Indeed, I was wrong . . . I was wrong. . . . I . . . I . . .

[Enter MRS. MAROSI.]

MAROSI. Look, Mr. Sarkany. . . . My, what's happened to you?

SARKANY. I am the cause of everything. I am a climber, a publicity-hound. . . .

MAROSI. Mr. Sarkany, I shall not stay in this house another minute. If you knew what happened here last night!

SARKANY. You don't say! Leave me alone! That's all I needed!

MAROSI. I beg your pardon, my virtue—

SARKANY. Take your virtue out of here! Get out of here! Can't you see I am beside myself? [In tears.] Can't you see that I am merely the ruins of myself? Can't you see that I am the cause of everything? I can't stand this any longer. I must have a little sleep.

[Exits, crying.]

MAROSI [alone]. What's happened? I don't know what all this means! Ah. . . .

[Sinks into an armchair. Enter BERTALAN, with documents.]

BERTALAN. How do you do.

MAROSI. Ah, you are still here? You dare look me in the face? Give me back my honor!

BERTALAN. Ask him who took it.

MAROSI. My honor is as good as anybody's.

BERTALAN. I've already spoken with Mrs. Sarkany and confessed everything. It would have been best to tell her the truth right away. But she wouldn't have believed me last night.

MAROSI. And she did now?

BERTALAN. Yes, she did. Mrs. Sarkany said she would ask your forgiveness. As for me, I beg your pardon now.

[Enter PUZSER.]

PUZSER. I beg your pardon also, my only admirer. I didn't want to hurt you. I tell you this on my late word of honor.

BERTALAN. You are as pure in our eyes as the Maid of Orleans.

PUZSER. And here is my hand!

MAROSI. Ah, Mr. Puzser, anger vanishes from my heart when I can shake the hand of a real criminal. Ah, Mr. Puzser, you were glorious last night.

PUZSER. I should say so!

MAROSI. You must have read a lot of detective novels to know so much about it.

PUZSER. Novels? Never!

[Enter MRS. SARKANY.]

MRS. SARKANY. What's this? General armistice?

BERTALAN. We are asking her pardon.

MRS. SARKANY. And I'll raise your salary, Mrs. Marosi.

[Enter LENKE. *She wears a white gown, carries several books. She is crying loudly.*]

PUZSER. Guess I don't need to ask her how the exams were.

MRS. SARKANY. Lenke, I fear the worst!

BERTALAN. The end!

MAROSI. Miss Lenke!

[LENKE *is crying loudly.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Don't cry, my child. How was it?

LENKE. I flunked.

[*Loud sob.*]

MRS. SARKANY. But I sent a barrel of wine to the professor of algebra.

LENKE. It was too late! I met the butler with the barrel on my way home, after I'd flunked.

MRS. SARKANY. Oh, the scoundrel!

LENKE. I told him to bring it home again. What's the use of giving it away now?

BERTALAN. I can't bear the sight of so much misery! It breaks my heart!

[*Exits.*]

MRS. SARKANY. Don't cry, child. More was lost at Mohacs.

LENKE [*crying even more bitterly*]. Don't mention Mohacs! I flunked in history also. He asked me about the battle of Mohacs.

MAROSI. Poor little girl.

[*Exits, crying.*]

MRS. SARKANY. History, too?

LENKE. The professor doesn't like me.

PUZSER. What's his name?

LENKE. Dr. Konopishty.

PUZSER [*severely*]. Where does he live?

LENKE. Vaczi Boulevard 12.

PUZSER. All right, I'll burglar him.

[*Exits.*]

MRS. SARKANY. But how was it possible, my child? You studied all year long and yet you flunked!

LENKE. Ella, I'm going to tell you something.

MRS. SARKANY. Do, my child.

LENKE. Tell me, am I a fallen woman now?

MRS. SARKANY. Oh, go on. You are a foolish little girl. Don't cry, silly.

LENKE [*embracing* MRS. SARKANY]. Ella, Ella, I am in love.

MRS. SARKANY. What's that?

LENKE. I am very much in love.

MRS. SARKANY. With whom?

LENKE. Bertalan.

MRS. SARKANY. I've suspected that for a long time.

LENKE. Ella, I can't help it . . . I have to. . . You can't forbid the flower to bud . . .

MRS. SARKANY. Who said so? Tell that to a gardener and he'll laugh at you. You can forbid it to every flower nowadays. Why, you can get violets in the fall and lilies-of-the-valley in the winter! They are all forbidden! You can't refer to out-of-mode, ancient theories. A modern gardener can and will forbid it to every flower!

LENKE. I don't mean it that way.

MRS. SARKANY. But I do! Modern education is just like that. You will forget it!

LENKE. I can't! I won't marry anybody else! I flunked because of him!

MRS. SARKANY. Wait a few years —you are still a child. . . .

LENKE. Have you anything against him in principle?

MRS. SARKANY. Nothing. Bertalan is a decent, nice boy!

LENKE [*embracing her*]. Oh, I am so happy! And I am so hungry!

MRS. SARKANY. There's a little lunch in your room, my child.

LENKE. I am so happy! The flunk doesn't hurt any more!

[*Wipes away her tears, kisses*

MRS. SARKANY *and exits. Enter*

SARKANY, *in his everyday clothes.*]

SARKANY. Ah, how dare you face me?

MRS. SARKANY. Are you still angry with me? Haven't you enough proofs of—

SARKANY. Of my being the cause of everything? I've heard this a hundred times. [*Sits at desk.*] My life is not a life any longer.

MRS. SARKANY [*goes to him*]. Why, nothing has happened! You wanted to study the jail-system, and you have!

[*Exits. Enter BERTALAN.*]

BERTALAN. Thank God, boss. I've been looking for you all over the place. We've won the Csongrady *versus* Loeb! The court gave us huge attorney's fees.

SARKANY. Huge fees? I'm beginning to regain my interest in life! Bertalan, you may take a Havana cigar from the box.

BERTALAN. I have already.

SARKANY. Take another one.

BERTALAN. I took three.

SARKANY. Now I am happy again.

BERTALAN. Strattburg was here again and asked for an extension of the time limit. He has another child. The ninth.

SARKANY. Granted.

BERTALAN. Aren't you sick, boss?

SARKANY. No, I am not. But I learned a lot last night.

BERTALAN. Ah, last night. So did I!

[*Enter CHAMBERMAID.*]

CHAMBERMAID. There are some gentlemen here, sir.

SARKANY. Gentlemen? They must be Csato's seconds. Two of them?

CHAMBERMAID. No, three.

BERTALAN. Three of them? I'll see who they are.

[*Exits.*]

SARKANY. Let me have their cards.

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, sir.

SARKANY. Three of them!

CHAMBERMAID [*returns with cards*]. Here, sir.

SARKANY [*looking at the cards*]. Cseresnyes. . . . Oh, I see! Look, my old professor of geography! And my principal! Ask them to come in! Why, that's really very charming of them! I didn't go to the reunion, so they come to visit me!

[*Enter CSERESNYES, PROFESSOR OF GEOGRAPHY, PRINCIPAL.*]

CSERESNYES. Hello!

SARKANY. Hello, Cseresnyes! How do you do, Professor! Principal!

CSERESNYES. Is Mr. Sarkany at home, please?

SARKANY. Mr. Sarkany? Why, I am Sarkany! Can't you recognize me? Please, sit down, gentlemen.

[*The gentlemen sit down.*]

CSERESNYES. Are you Sarkany? Hello, Jozsi. I must have been very drunk last night. I can't even recognize my friends.

PROFESSOR. Mr. Sarkany looks quite different at home.

PRINCIPAL. I wouldn't have recognized him, either.

CSERESNYES. Well, Jozsi, we've come . . . You know . . . You see . . . I have to go home at noon.

SARKANY. Bon voyage. Have a nice trip.

CSERESNYES. Thank you. [*Aside.*] Perhaps this isn't Sarkany, either. [*Aloud.*] Of course . . . why certainly . . . You are Jozsi Sarkany . . .

SARKANY. Of course, old man. [*Rings the bell.*]

CSERESNYES. So we've come here . . . hahaha . . . you know . . .

SARKANY. I don't.

CSERESNYES. Don't you remember?

CHAMBERMAID [*enters*]. Yes, sir.

SARKANY. Cognac for the gentlemen.

[*CHAMBERMAID serves cognac.*]

CSERESNYES. Hm. Well, old man, my train leaves in a few minutes. It was an excellent idea, but now . . . you know . . .

PROFESSOR. Just try to remember.

PRINCIPAL. Can't you recollect anything?

SARKANY. I really don't know what you want, gentlemen.

CSERESNYES [*jovially*]. What time is it, old man? What's the time?

SARKANY. What time is it?

PROFESSOR. What time is it?

PRINCIPAL. What time is it?

SARKANY. What's this? Quarter to eleven.

CSERESNYES. Can't you understand?

PROFESSOR. Well?

PRINCIPAL. Jozsi! Jozsi!

CSERESNYES. You must have been very drunk yourself, old boy. But now we are sober again, and the joke is over. Give me back my watch.

PROFESSOR. Give me back my watch.

PRINCIPAL. Mine, too.

SARKANY. What's this? I have nothing to do with your watches.

[*All laugh.*]

CSERESNYES. Well, a joke is a joke, but this is serious. Give me back my watch.

PROFESSOR. The joke is over.

PRINCIPAL. I am in a hurry, give me back my watch.

SARKANY. What's this! An insane asylum! What's this?

CSERESNYES. Say, don't act as if you didn't know anything about it, or I'll get sore. Don't joke any longer.

SARKANY. Explain what you want of me! Insane asylum!

CSERESNYES. God, but your memory is bad! Well, last night, at the banquet . . . of course, out of fun . . . you were a little drunk, old man . . . and you swiped my watch . . .

PROFESSOR. Mine, too.

PRINCIPAL. And mine.

SARKANY. Your watches? Why, I wasn't even there!

CSERESNYES. Don't make fun of us! Why, who drank the toast to unity?

PROFESSOR. It was a beautiful speech.

CSERESNYES. Who vowed, in the name of all of us, to meet again in ten years?

PRINCIPAL. It was a beautiful moment.

SARKANY. I? Gentlemen, you are the victims of a horrible misunderstanding. I was not present.

CSERESNYES. Say, if you don't stop joking, I'll hit you over the head.

PROFESSOR. That's about enough of it.

PRINCIPAL [*impatiently*]. Don't make fun of old people.

[*Enter MRS. SARKANY. The gentlemen rise.*]

SARKANY. Professor Gal, Professor Szobolya, my old principal . . . my wife. [*The gentlemen bow.*] Imagine, my child, Laci Cseresnyes says that I was with them last night and that—

CSERESNYES. Say, I'm going to hit you!

MRS. SARKANY. Oh, I see! The gentlemen are looking for their watches?

CSERESNYES	}	Yes! Yes!
PROFESSOR		
PRINCIPAL		

MRS. SARKANY. My dear, when they . . . well, when they asked you to go away with them . . . well, Mr. Cseresnyes came over and he took away Puzser.

SARKANY [*yelling*]. Puzser! Now I know everything! Gentlemen! You are the victims of a common crook!

CSERESNYES. Why, weren't you with us last night?

SARKANY. No, I wasn't!

MRS. SARKANY. He was one of the clients of my husband . . . a thief. . . . He robbed all of you, didn't he?

PROFESSOR. My poor watch!

PRINCIPAL. It was only a little watch, but it struck every fifteen minutes.

CSERESNYES. I inherited it from my aunt.

MRS. SARKANY. But perhaps they aren't lost yet. I think Puzser is in the kitchen.

SARKANY [*rings the bell*]. One second, gentlemen. So this rascal supped instead of me. He even drank a toast!

PROFESSOR. It was a terrible speech. Full of banal phrases.

SARKANY. He made a vow in my name?

PRINCIPAL. It was a painful moment.

SARKANY [*to CHAMBERMAID*]. Tell Puzser to come here at once.

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, sir.

[*Exit CHAMBERMAID.*]

CSERESNYES. Well, if I had known this . . . but you know, Jozsi . . . we hadn't seen you for ten years . . . and then, we were all drunk . . .

[*Enter PUZSER.*]

PUZSER. Yes, Mr. Sarkany?

CSERESNYES. This is the man! Of course, it was he! [*To PUZSER.*] Hello, Jozsi.

PUZSER. Don't Jozsi me. I told you I am Janos.

PROFESSOR	}	That's the man!
PRINCIPAL		

SARKANY. Beelzebub! Did you or did you not appear, in my stead, in my clothes, with these gentlemen, at a banquet last night?

PUZSER. I did. I was very hungry.

CSERESNYES	}	Unheard of! Terrible!
PROFESSOR		
PRINCIPAL		

SARKANY. Did you or did you not drink a toast in my name?

PUZSER. I thought, once in my life, I'd be a toastmaster myself. It was my maiden speech.

SARKANY. And you vowed that—

PUZSER. We would meet again in ten years. I'll be there, too. I always keep my word.

SARKANY. But this is not all. You stole three watches!

CSERESNYES. Give me back my watch!

PROFESSOR	}	My watch!
PRINCIPAL		

PUZSER. Do you think I stole them in order to return them? What do you think I am? A safe deposit?

SARKANY. Return the watches at once.

PUZSER. Too late. [*Pulls out three pawn-tickets.*] They are in hock already.

SARKANY. This is horrible! Gentlemen, if you permit me, I'll return your losses . . . from my own . . .

PUZSER. I beg your pardon, I can't let you do that! My sense of gentlemanliness forbids me to accept this sacrifice!

SARKANY. Well, who should take them out? The gentlemen themselves?

PUZSER. I don't care who—but I can't let you do that!

SARKANY. Well, where is the money?

PUZSER. I gave it to the Lombroso fund.

SARKANY. Puzser, I think the moment is rapidly approaching when I shall either kick you out or throw you into jail.

PUZSER. Throw me into jail?

Why, who are you, anyway? Lawyer or State's attorney? Now all of you blame me for everything. In another minute you will say that I am to be blamed because Miss Lenke flunked!

SARKANY. Flunked?

PUZSER. And how! Algebra and history!

LENKE [*enters with Mrs. MAROSI*]. I flunked, yes. But I shall reform.

MAROSI. She will study more diligently hereafter.

MRS. SARKANY. And if she behaves, she will marry, in a year or two. . . .

BERTALAN [*comes from rear*]. I'll be there, too.

MRS. SARKANY. Provided you deserve her.

SARKANY [*takes the pawn-tickets*]. Gentlemen, if you please—please, come to my office—I shall return your watches—After all I am the cause of it. . . .

[*Exeunt* SARKANY, CSERESNYES, PROFESSOR, PRINCIPAL.]

PUZSER [*lifts his hands*]. I bless you all!

CURTAIN

T H E D E V I L

Adapted by
OLIVER HERFORD

First produced in America by
Henry W. Savage
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CHARACTERS

KARL MAHLER, <i>an artist</i>	
HEINRICH, <i>his valet</i>	
MIMI, <i>his model</i>	
OLGA ZANDEN, <i>the banker's wife</i>	
HERMAN ZANDEN, <i>a banker</i>	
THE DEVIL (<i>calling himself Dr. Miller</i>)	
ELSA BERG, <i>an heiress</i>	
MADAME HOFMANN.....	} <i>Guests at the Zandens' ball.</i>
MADAME REINECKE.....	
MADAME SCHLESWIG.....	
MADAME LASSEN.....	
HERR GROSSER.....	
HERR BESSER.....	
MANSERVANT	

SCENES

- ACT I. *Karl Mahler's Studio, Vienna. (Afternoon.)*
ACT II. *Conservatory Reception Room at the Zandens'. (Evening.)*
ACT III. *At Karl's Studio. (The next morning.)*

ACT ONE

[SCENE: Room next to KARL's studio. At the back of the stage to the left is a glass door with portière opening into the studio. Back of the stage to the right a fireplace with burning fire. In front of the fireplace an elevation about a foot high reaching into the middle of the room.]

This elevation is bordered by a wooden railing with an opening on each side. In the middle of the railing an ancient Gothic chair, with back toward the audience, the back of which is so high that a person sitting in it cannot be seen. On the right a door leading into the entrance

hall of the apartment. There is a little invisible door on the left near the footlights. About a yard from this door, a settee with the head end toward the glass door of the studio. Next to this settee a small antique table about three feet high. On the left a curio cabinet, and next to it a hall stand with some draperies. On the left next to the settee a large, gilded, standing candelabra, as used in churches.

There are many sketches, framed and unframed, about the room—some statues, some heads, busts and a very elegant electric candelabra hanging in the middle of the ceiling. The whole thing unharmonious but artistic. Down stage on the right a medium-sized table littered with books, magazines and bric-à-brac; a large palette lies on the top of some books and scattered among the other things are some tubes of paint and paint brushes.

When the curtain rises the stage is empty for a few minutes.]

KARL [*comes in with hat and overcoat which he takes off*]. Heinrich! Heinrich! [HEINRICH *coming from studio*.] Where were you?

HEINRICH. Nowhere, sir.

KARL. The door is wide open; anybody could have walked in. [*As HEINRICH goes into the studio and comes out with a velvet house-jacket, calls after him.*] Where's to-day's paper? [*He finds the newspaper.*] Well, hurry up.

[HEINRICH *comes back and helps KARL put on his jacket.*]

KARL [*lights a cigarette*]. Did you take my dress suit to be pressed?

HEINRICH. Yes, sir; he will bring it back in an hour.

[*Starts right.*]

KARL. Good! Here's a crown. Get me a white tie, same as the last one. [HEINRICH *starts right*.] Hold on! Put out a dress shirt on the bed, then look for my pearl buttons—they are probably in the top drawer—in a match-box. Stop! Give me that crown. Take this. [*Gives him a bill.*] Get me a pair of white gloves, seven and a half. Oh! and Heinrich, before you go, put the Venetian chair next to the window. At three o'clock Mrs. Zanden will be here to have her portrait painted, and I shall be at home to nobody. [*Reclines on the settee.*] Give me an ash tray. [HEINRICH *gives it to him.*] All right, go along.

HEINRICH. Beg your pardon, sir—

KARL [*seated on couch left*]. What is it?

HEINRICH. Mimi is here.

KARL. Where?

HEINRICH. Waiting in the studio.

KARL [*indifferent, reading newspaper*]. Send her away.

HEINRICH [*goes to the glass door*]. Fraulein, Herr Mahler does not need you to-day.

⊕ [*Exits left.*]

MIMI [*coming in*]. Hello. [KARL *is silent, continues reading his paper*. MIMI *comes down left*.] Don't you want to work to-day?

KARL. No.

[*Continues reading paper*. HEINRICH *goes into the studio*.]

MIMI [*in bad humor, crosses to center*]. Good-bye. [*Turns around.*] And to-morrow?

KARL. No.

MIMI [*sad*]. Good-bye. [*Wipes her eyes.*] You don't love me any more . . . you don't love me any more.

KARL. Oh! It's going to start again!

MIMI. Ever since last fall you've been different. I knew it right away when you started to paint landscapes. When you are in love you paint Venuses. I know what it means when you start to paint trees.

KARL. You're silly, Mimi.

MIMI. I know it. With her hat and coat on every model is silly.

KARL. Go home, Mimi.

MIMI [*goes to head of couch*]. Yes, yes. Go home! Be a good girl. For a week now you've sent me home without my even taking my gloves off. I'm no use any more. [*Begins to cry but stops it at once.*] Look here: I know everything.

KARL. Really?

MIMI [*from behind him, raises his head*]. Look at me! Look at me! You want to get married? Tell me! No—you don't dare.

KARL. No.

MIMI [*comes to left of him*]. Oh, you tell me anything you want to my face, but I know you're going to marry a girl named Elsa. The wife of your friend Mr. Zanden has arranged everything—look at me and deny it, if you dare. After all, what's the use! You wouldn't tell me the truth anyway.

KARL. You little mind-reader.

MIMI. She's a nice one, Mrs. Zanden! Instead of taking you on herself, she marries you to a friend of hers. But I don't care; you don't love me any more—doing landscapes all the time.

KARL. Well, what do you want?

MIMI [*crosses to right of him and kneels*]. Tell me you *do* love me. [*Pouting.*]

KARL [*bored*]. Yes, yes—of course.

MIMI [*imitating him*]. Yes, yes, of course. Is that the best you can do?

KARL. Well, what shall I say?

MIMI. Oh! You painters! It's always the same. First you say, "What an angel! What a Madonna! What a Venus! What color! What hair! What lines!" Then all of a sudden, it's, "Oh, my dear! Why, you've gone yellow." The next day you're green, and then it's, "I have no time to-day." And, first thing you know, you're—pooh! Landscapes. [*Scornfully. She goes to him above table at the head of couch, takes his head in her hands.*] Don't you like me?

KARL [*smiling*]. Why, yes.

MIMI. If you were really nice, you would at least promise to marry me. All the other artists promised. They weren't so mean as you are! Oh, yes, I know I am annoying you. I'm absolutely boring you.

KARL. If you were not such a dear little nuisance—[*Reaches up and draws her down to him.*]—I would have done with you a long time ago. [*Kisses her.*] And now, run away, little girl; go home.

MIMI. Don't you want me tomorrow? Or the day after to-morrow?

KARL. No.

MIMI [*crossing to him at couch*]. You will never have me pose for you at all any more?

KARL [*rises, crosses with her to door right*]. I'll look in on you this evening on my way to the Zandens'.

MIMI. But you can't work in my house. I've only a lamp!

KARL. Ha! Ha! Ha! Well, we'll put that out!

[*Has taken her to the door.*]

MIMI. Oh, will we! [*Laughing.*]
Maybe you'll get put out.

KARL. 'Bye, 'bye! [*MIMI exits.*
KARL *lights another cigarette—the bell rings sharply. Calls, somewhat excited.*] Heinrich! Heinrich!

HEINRICH [*comes in from studio.*]
Yes, sir.

[*Runs through the door on the right, which he leaves open, and goes off to open the hall door.*]

KARL [*fixes his tie nervously, puts away newspaper, puts out his cigarette in ash tray, and arranges his hair. He goes toward the door through which HERMAN and OLGA enter. HEINRICH closes the door from the outside. KARL bows.*] Madame!

[*Bows silently to HERMAN.*]

HERMAN [*in a hurry*]. I only came to bring Olga, my boy; I must go back at once.

OLGA [*has been looking around. She goes to center and over to left*]. So this is the famous studio.

KARL [*looking around*]. Funny, isn't it? More like a junk shop.

HERMAN. We might have chosen another day to begin Olga's portrait. We have waited six years, so we could just as well have waited until to-morrow, but the preparations for to-night's ball made Olga so nervous that I thought it best to bring her here. You know this ball is a kind of house-warming.

[*Crosses over to center.*]

OLGA. We were obliged to invite such a lot of people, to clear off our social obligations.

HERMAN. I wish it were over. I hate these functions. Old Freebody, in whose business I started, was worth ninety millions, and he never gave a

party in his life—or anything else, for that matter. When do you want me to call for Olga?

KARL [*right center*]. Well, it gets dark very early now; in three quarters of an hour we won't be able to see any more.

HERMAN. Well, then—

KARL [*looking at his watch*]. Let's say four o'clock.

OLGA [*after looking at a picture left very closely*]. Who is that?

KARL. Oh, some model.

OLGA. Wasn't that the girl we just met on the stairs?

HERMAN [*crosses quickly to left*]. I must have a look at her. [*Looks at picture. OLGA stands so as to hide picture.*] Oh, better not. [*Makes a gesture as if he had seen something indecent.*] Well, every minute counts—I must be off. [*Shakes his finger at KARL.*] You'll have to stop that sort of thing now, Karl. You know you are one of the reasons for to-night's ball. Isn't he, Olga?

OLGA. Yes—to-night Karl is to fall in love with his future wife.

KARL [*goes left center*]. I shall do my best. [*To HERMAN.*] Sentenced to marry! Well, I'm prepared to meet my doom.

OLGA [*seated on couch, with a little sigh*]. At last! I shall be glad.

HERMAN. So shall I. So will the girl. So will Karl.

KARL. I hope so. She's a charming girl.

OLGA. Wait till you—

KARL. I know—I know. I shall adore her. But I have till this evening, you know.

HERMAN [*crossing to OLGA*]. Well, I'm off. My agent may telephone any minute. [*He kisses OLGA's hand.*] I shall call for you at four

o'clock, my dear. And don't worry about to-night; the caterer has his instructions.

[*Crossing to right, shaking hands with KARL, who holds him back.*]

KARL [*shaking HERMAN'S hand*]. Aren't you afraid to leave your wife?

HERMAN. Shall I tell you the truth? I'm hurrying because I'm afraid of changing my mind and taking Olga away with me.

OLGA. You're not jealous?

HERMAN [*at door*]. If I weren't afraid of appearing ridiculous, I would say: Be good! And now, good-bye.

[*He goes off, KARL taking him to the door of entrance hall.*]

KARL [*coming back, closes the door, and stands still for a minute. When he comes back, OLGA shivers slightly and touches her forehead with her hand. Crosses to left center by OLGA*]. What is it?

OLGA [*with a nervous, soft laugh*]. Nothing—nothing at all.

KARL [*tenderly*]. Are you frightened? [*OLGA does not answer.*] Tell me.

OLGA [*nervous, confused, as if she is afraid of him*]. I don't know, but—I feel as if—as if—

KARL. What do you mean?

OLGA [*trying to laugh, but very nervously*]. I had the same feeling once in Dresden, when my mother took me to a boarding-school and left me there. I felt as if I were quite alone in this wide, strange world—And now—you know yourself—I have fought against coming here for six years. [*Looks around.*] What a queer place. I don't think I like it. [*KARL crosses center and up laughing.*] Strange monsters, cut off heads,

and you in the middle of all this like a wizard. While my husband was here I did not feel it, but now these heads seem to stare at me.

[*She shivers.*]

KARL. Don't be nervous—every woman I paint comes here.

OLGA [*seated on couch, quietly*]. And do you paint every woman that comes here?

KARL. No.

[*Silence.*]

OLGA. Did you understand my husband just now?

KARL. I think I did.

OLGA. He has often pretended to be jealous, but this time there was a ring in his voice that made me feel that there was something behind it.

KARL. You don't really think he's jealous?

OLGA [*crosses to chair*]. No. But this is the first time I've been alone with you.

KARL. Now we can talk things over. I've wanted to for a long time.

OLGA [*leans against right back of chair*]. We've done well to avoid it all these years. A good conscience is like a warm bath—one feels so comfortable in it.

KARL. Last Thursday, when we spoke about my painting your portrait, you seemed embarrassed.

OLGA [*looks at him; their eyes meet*]. Don't let us talk about it. I don't want to.

KARL. Don't be afraid of me. If I were not I, your fear might be justified; but as it is, surely we can trust ourselves to talk things over quietly. To think that seven years ago I was a teacher in Herman's family—and I was there the day your engagement was announced—it was the evening of the day we—

OLGA [*puts her hand on his, softly reproaching him*]. Karl.

KARL. We kissed each other for the first time. Oh, I know. I was only a drawing teacher—but you—what were you? Just a poor little friend of Herman's sisters. Sometimes you were asked to tea in their grand house. And there we met—a beggar boy and a beggar girl at the rich man's table. Do you wonder? And then, just as we realized what we were to each other, one fine day Herman up and proposed to you. Such a dazzling offer—who could blame you?

OLGA [*hurt*]. Please—please, Karl.

KARL. We were two poor little souls who found one another in the wilderness of wealth—only to lose each other. Even the memory of that one little kiss. . . .

OLGA. Dear Karl, don't. We have grown up to be sensible people—we have put it out of our thoughts.

KARL. Oh, I know it's all over. To-day I'm — [*Humorously*] — the famous painter, your husband is my friend, and though we see one another every day, we have never spoken of it again. I didn't even have the courage to ask you to sit for your portrait. I was afraid, and I think you were afraid. And so was your husband. And that is why until this day—

OLGA [*steps down one pace from chair; gives him her hand*]. You are a real friend.

KARL [*goes to her, gently*]. There's nothing to be afraid of.

OLGA. Oh, it was only my husband's voice—something in his manner that frightened me. He must know what we were to one another, though he has never made the

slightest allusion to it, not one single word in all these years. But when he left us here alone, he seemed to feel— [*Breaks off*]. But there is no reason for it, is there? We are not in love with one another, are we? And it's just lovely to think that we have not entirely forgotten old times. Don't you think so, Karl?

KARL [*goes to chair*]. Of course I do.

OLGA. Because if we still loved one another, you would not marry, would you?

[*Taking off gloves*.]

KARL. Of course not.

OLGA. So you will be married and you will be very, very happy. And I shall be happy, too, because it is my own idea, and I have picked out a nice girl for you—pretty and clever— [*Karl bows silent acquiescence*]. And now— [*Goes up and knocks on back of chair, pretending to enter imaginary door. She speaks in an everyday voice, in marked contrast to former tone*]. How do you do, Professor? I have come to have my portrait painted.

KARL [*quite enthusiastic*]. Last night I made a sketch of you from memory. . . . Oh, I've made lots of sketches of you, but now—now I see you in another light.

OLGA. How do you mean?

KARL. Yesterday I looked upon you as a model. To-day you are a motif—you are a revelation. . . . There is something in your eyes. . . .

OLGA. Please, please, Karl, we agreed that—that—

KARL. Pardon me, I'll try to remember.

[*Goes up on platform*.]

OLGA. Let's go to work now—it's getting late.

KARL. Whenever you are ready—

OLGA. What am I to do?

KARL [*steps behind her to take hat pins out of her hat*]. Take off your hat and your coat, please.

OLGA. Thanks, I can do that myself.

[*She takes her hat and coat off.*]

KARL [*takes her coat up on platform.*]

KARL [*passing her chair as he goes up*]. Do you use perfume in your hair?

OLGA. I? Never!

[*At chair up in alcove.*]

KARL. Oh, then it is the natural perfume of your hair. [*She looks at him reproachfully.*] Pardon me, I stood too near. [*Looks at her in silence. She crosses back of large chair to couch left, and sits facing audience.*]

OLGA [*nervously, turns her head to him*]. What is it?

KARL [*leaning against big chair, looking at her dress*]. I was just thinking—didn't your husband say an evening frock?

OLGA. Yes. Herman wants me painted *décolletée*—in an evening gown; just a head and shoulders, you know. I should have preferred a street dress.

KARL. I'm afraid I agree with Herman on that point. But have you—didn't you?—Where is the dress?

OLGA. Oh, I thought you would only be painting my face the first sitting.

KARL [*comes center, laughs*]. So you thought I began at the top of a portrait and painted down?

OLGA [*hesitating*]. Yes.

KARL. Why, the drawing of the

shoulders is almost more important than the head in the first sketch.

OLGA. Oh, dear. How stupid of me.

KARL [*crossing left*]. I'll tell you what— [*He selects some draperies from those hanging in the corner*]. I have some draperies here—

OLGA. Well—

KARL. You can arrange one of these around your shoulders like—like an evening gown.

OLGA [*mechanically*]. Yes.

KARL [*hanging drapery on cabinet left*]. You will have to be quick because it will soon be dark. Here are the draperies—you'll find some pins over here, and I'll go into the studio while you—until you—

[*Goes to door of studio.*]

OLGA [*seated*]. Until when? Why?

KARL. Why, if I'm to paint your shoulders—well—[*Turns away toward studio.*—your blouse?

OLGA [*terribly embarrassed*]. Of course—

KARL. Do just as if you were at home. I'll close this door. [*Goes to door right at entrance hall and locks it.*] And now I'll go into the studio . . . and you can lock this door yourself. [*He has opened the door of the studio and has made one step into studio, and now says in a low tone.*] Oh! It's snowing.

[*He looks at OLGA.*]

OLGA. Snowing?

KARL. Snowing hard.

[*Silence.*]

OLGA. Hadn't we better?—perhaps—perhaps—to-morrow—or—or— [*She has been saying this very slowly, as if afraid, but now suddenly regains confidence, as if she had had a saving*

idea.] To-morrow I could bring my maid.

KARL. Oh, no, no. Your husband would certainly want to know the reason, and really—if this door is closed— [He goes back to his studio.] It's too bad! This snow takes all the light away. But never mind—never mind; the snow shovelers will be glad of it.

[He has spoken the last few sentences in a very low voice, as if the situation were painful to him. He goes backwards into the studio and now closes the door. OLGA is standing with her back toward the studio staring in front of her. She now shrinks together, shivers, turns around, and with sudden resolution, turns the key, locking the door to the studio. Slowly unbuttons her blouse, looks at the shawls, of which she chooses one. Afterwards takes her blouse off quietly, putting the shawl around her shoulders. She has put the blouse on the settee before she arranges the shawl. She now picks up the blouse and wants to put it on the chair in front of the fireplace. Her arm is already stretched out when she suddenly drops the blouse, utters a suppressed shriek, dropping blouse by chair, and crosses quickly to foot of couch.]

The DEVIL, in fashionable frock coat, a crimson carnation in buttonhole, a man of from thirty-five to thirty-eight years old, resembling in face classical Mephisto, very elegant, picks up the blouse and offers

it to OLGA in a most polite manner.]

DEVIL. Pardon, madame. [Comes center a little.] I think you dropped something. [OLGA takes the blouse mechanically and looks at him frightened.] I must beg your pardon, madame. I came from lunch. Karl was not at home. I waited and I fell asleep in this very comfortable chair. [He rubs his eyes.] Forgive, me, madame, for opening my eyes at a moment when, for propriety's sake, I should have at least kept one eye shut.

OLGA [puts blouse on couch and goes left, horrified and disgusted]. Oh!

DEVIL [right of couch left]. I am aware this is a base insinuation— [Ironical].—of course you only come here—

OLGA. To have my portrait painted.

DEVIL. I once had a similar encounter at a dentist's; and the lady, to prove that my insinuations were false, did not hesitate to sacrifice a perfectly good tooth.

OLGA. I tell you, I—

DEVIL [very polite]. Oh, I know you speak the truth. I am even at liberty to believe it, though your truth is only partly in style. Truth should have nothing on at all, you know.

OLGA. The insolence! What right have you to speak to me? Who are you? What are you doing here? Karl! [KARL tries door outside.] Karl!

[She opens the door of the studio.

KARL appears on the threshold and looks surprisedly at the DEVIL.]

DEVIL [*crosses up right center very quickly*]. How do you do?

KARL [*taken aback*]. How do you do?—er—how are you?

DEVIL [*quickly*]. You don't seem to remember me—we met at Monte Carlo—

KARL [*up left center*]. Oh, yes.

DEVIL. Quite an eventful day it was.

KARL [*comes down a little*]. Yes, yes, I remember. It was last fall, and I had just lost all my money at roulette. As I turned from the table, I caught sight of a stranger frowning at me. [*Pointing to DEVIL.*] It was you. I was startled, because only a moment before I had seen you next to the croupier, and I thought I heard you laugh when I lost. But now I remember—you stood behind me, and when I had lost everything, you offered me, a total stranger, a handful of louis d'or.

DEVIL. You refused—beggingly.

KARL. Yes, but—

DEVIL [*continuing*]. You took them—protestingly.

KARL. In five minutes I had won everything back, and 20,000 francs besides. Your gold seemed to have magic power, I remember. When you gave it to me it seemed to burn.

DEVIL. But you paid me back and invited me to supper. I had to refuse, because I was obliged to leave for Spain the same evening, but I promised to look you up the next time you needed me—[*Crosses to right.*—and here I am.

KARL. Well, I'll be—

DEVIL [*interrupting quickly*]. Don't mention it. I took a little nap in your chair.

[*Goes up to back of big chair.*]

OLGA [*goes center, pointing to big*

chair. Frightened]. It's very strange—this chair was empty; there was nobody there.

DEVIL [*stepping toward her, bowing. In a tone allowing no contradiction*]. Then I was mistaken, madame.

[*OLGA goes over behind couch left. Silence. OLGA and KARL look at the DEVIL suspiciously.*]

KARL [*left center, embarrassed*]. Won't you please sit down? Allow me to introduce you. I quite forget your name. . . .

DEVIL [*right center*]. Call me anything you like; we only use names when the party is absent. But I am here now—call me Miller, or Brown, or Black. [*Start from KARL. DEVIL stops him.*] If you think Doctor sounds better, why not call me Doctor Miller?

KARL [*very much embarrassed*]. Doctor Miller— [*Crosses to right center. The DEVIL kisses OLGA's hand devoutly at foot of couch.*] Under ordinary circumstances, I should now take my hat and leave; [*Goes up center; turns.*] but my infinite tact compels me to force my presence upon you in this disagreeable situation.

[*Sits down in chair center.*]

OLGA [*crossing to KARL. To the DEVIL*]. How dare you! Karl! This man has the insolence to—

DEVIL [*seated center. Very quickly*]. Your husband has been dead some time?

OLGA [*right*]. I'm not a widow.

DEVIL [*very quick*]. Oh, divorced?

OLGA. No.

DEVIL. Well, if you think that I have insulted you, I should say the

proper person to refer me to would be your husband. [*Rises. To KARL.*] Of course, if you wish, I am at your disposal also. [*To OLGA.*] But, madame, this would be admitting—

KARL. What's it all about? I don't understand you. You come in here, I don't know how or where from, and you—you act as if you had trapped us—

OLGA [*goes to KARL right center*]. The idea!

DEVIL. Say what you like; I cannot go.

OLGA. Why not?

DEVIL. If I were to go now, it would be as much as to say, "Pardon me, I fear I intrude." But if I remain, I show that I suspect nothing.

KARL. We don't need your assurance.

[*OLGA crosses to left below couch.*]

DEVIL [*bows politely. Embarrassing silence*]. Suppose we talk about something else. I think we are in for a snowstorm. [*Standing right of studio door. Silence. OLGA stands near the door leading to the studio, quite astonished.*] Are you sending anything to this year's exhibition?

KARL [*uncomfortable*]. Perhaps—I may send something.

[*Silence.*]

DEVIL [*lights a cigarette at table left center. Puffs cigarette. On second puff.*] Permit me, madame. [*OLGA, picking up blouse, as if suddenly awakened and realizing her position, goes into the studio, closing the door behind her.*] Full of temperament—full of temperament. And pretty, too.

[*KARL starts to light cigarette at table left center. Dropping cigarette, he crosses to chair*

up center; sits and looks at the DEVIL without speaking.]

DEVIL. Too bad she doesn't love her husband. [*KARL turns quickly toward the DEVIL. Rapidly.*] How do I know? The way she turned to you just now when she fancied herself insulted—it didn't escape me. [*KARL takes up the ash tray and throws it angrily on table.*] No; she doesn't love her husband. He must be either a genius or a very common man. Marriage with them is always unlucky. Believe me, common men live so low that women are afraid somebody will steal in at night through the window which they forgot to lock. And Genius! Well, that lives on the top floor—so many stairs, no elevator. Her ideal is—[*A motion of the hand, wanting to express an even, middle position.*]—the second floor. [*KARL looks impatiently at his watch and goes toward the door of the studio. The DEVIL leans back blowing the smoke of his cigarette, indifferently.*] This is the second time I have seen her shoulders.

KARL [*coming down left of couch*]. What do you mean?

DEVIL. The first time I saw them was in Paris—[*Start from KARL.*]—at the Louvre—only they were on the "Aphrodite." Am I right?

KARL [*crossing to large chair right center. In bad humor*]. How should I know?

DEVIL [*lifting himself upright, cynically*]. Which shoulders have you not seen?

KARL [*angry*]. I've seen the "Aphrodite."

DEVIL [*seated on couch*]. Well, you may take my word. I have seen them both. And, believe me, since

Alcamenes, I have only known one sculptor who could model such shoulders.

KARL. Who's that?

DEVIL. Good living. Such tender, soft lines are only possible for a woman who lives exquisitely well. I take it she is the wife of a millionaire? [KARL goes again toward door of studio impatiently.] Is she dressing?

KARL [nervously]. I suppose so.

DEVIL. Is there a looking-glass in your studio?

KARL [comes down left of couch]. Yes.

DEVIL. She must be very respectable. [KARL looks at him astonished.] If a lady takes as long as that to dress before a looking-glass, she's not a—model—anyway.

KARL [crosses around foot of couch to table left center]. Look here! I think your remarks are, to say the least, in very bad taste.

DEVIL [standing erect]. Do you mean that?

KARL [aggressively]. I do.

DEVIL [patting KARL's cheek]. Then you must be respectable, too. [Crosses to big chair. KARL stares at him astonished.] In a situation like this, only a very respectable man could be so infernally stupid.

[KARL crosses to right. OLGA opens door of studio, goes toward KARL without looking at the DEVIL, who is hidden in chair.]

OLGA [dropping shawl on couch]. What's the time?

[Crosses to KARL, right.]

DEVIL [looking up over back of chair]. He'll be here in ten minutes.

OLGA [angry]. Who?

DEVIL. Your husband.

OLGA. Oh! So you weren't asleep, after all.

DEVIL. Oh, yes, I was. [Rises.] But "What's the time?" always means the husband. A woman's intuition invariably anticipates her husband's coming by ten minutes. If it weren't for that ten minutes, there would be more divorced women—[He goes and unlocks the door of the hall.]—and fewer locked doors.

[KARL crosses to left center.]

OLGA [taking her hat]. Will this never stop!

DEVIL. I tried to change the subject. I started to speak about the weather—the Exhibition—but Karl wouldn't have it.

OLGA. Karl!

KARL. I? I haven't said a single word.

DEVIL [crosses to big chair]. But your actions fairly shouted. The way you jumped up, looked at your watch, went to the door—[To OLGA.] He was afraid, the poor fellow.

KARL. Afraid of what?

[Left center.]

DEVIL [to OLGA]. That your husband would come before you had finished dressing. I don't blame him.

OLGA [right]. What, again!

KARL [left center]. Can't you—

DEVIL. Come now! Let us be logical—let us look the situation in the face. Enter your husband—[OLGA comes down right.] "Well, here I am: where is the picture?" "The picture?" [Shrugs his shoulders.] "There is no picture. Karl hasn't even touched a brush." Your husband is astonished—he tries to speak—the words stick in his throat—he gasps: "Well, if you didn't paint,

why is she dressing?" Imagine the situation! You look at one another, horribly embarrassed; Karl stammers something, but that only makes it worse. Nothing has happened—and yet the mischief is done. What mischief? Appearances—appearances. They're like fly-paper. There's no getting away from them. [*Speaking to OLGA.*] You go home with your husband, and he doesn't speak—and if you ask him, "Why don't you say something?" his blood seems to boil. If you ask him to take a cab, he suspects that you want to avoid meeting somebody—every word that you utter tortures him. And if—

KARL [*center*]. And if it *were* so, we are not alone, you are here.

DEVIL [*icy and cynical*]. Just so, I am here—one word from me would save the situation—but—I know myself—I'm a strange, whimsical, almost cruel man—and I'm afraid I won't say the word. Tableau! Embarrassing silence! Then I say: "I regret that I should have come at such an inopportune moment." I take my hat and walk out discreetly. If necessary, I can even stammer my excuses.

OLGA. If this is a jest, it's a cruel one.

DEVIL [*bowing low*]. Possible, madame—but I can do better still. Of course, if you prefer it, I can make conversation. When your husband comes in, I can tell him that the portrait has not been touched and ask his pardon—

OLGA. Pardon? Pardon for what?

DEVIL [*bowing*]. For having—quite accidentally—seen your shoulders.

OLGA [*horrified*]. Who are you?

DEVIL. I am one who always comes at the right moment—I come

from Nowhere. [*Very bitingly.*] I am [*touching OLGA's forehead*] here—

OLGA. What do you want with me? You turn everything to evil. I have scarcely known you five minutes, and I seem to feel your fingers at my throat.

DEVIL. That's because I like you. With most pretty women I take longer.

KARL [*furiously, starts toward him*]. Look here. This has gone far enough!

[*Makes a few steps toward the DEVIL, who stands erect without moving. At the same time, HEINRICH comes to the door, which he opens, and starts speaking at once.*]

HEINRICH. The tailor has sent an evening suit, but it is not yours, sir.

DEVIL. Put it on the chair in the bedroom.

KARL. But it's not mine.

DEVIL [*gives a sign to HEINRICH to go out and do as he was told. Speaking to KARL*]. It's mine.

KARL. Yours?

DEVIL [*motions again to HEINRICH, who goes out. During speech OLGA goes up and gets her hat. KARL walks back and forth left center*]. I had to have it pressed. I told the tailor to send it here. I must dress for to-night. I'm going to a ball the prettiest woman in Vienna is giving at the house of the Duke of Maranse.

OLGA [*coming down right, frightened*]. But the Duke does not live there now— He's Ambassador in Madrid; he has sold his house—to us.

DEVIL. I know. I met him in Paris. He told me—

OLGA. We are living there now—we are giving the ball.

DEVIL. Am I mistaken? Am I not invited?

OLGA [*in a very low voice, dropping her head*]. Yes—yes, you are.

DEVIL [*very polite*]. Madame, you asked me a little while ago what I wanted. That's what I wanted. Thank you.

[*Bows and turns toward center. Silence.*]

OLGA. But my husband—

DEVIL [*turning to her*]. Will be delighted. I've just come from Odessa. I have good news. Wheat is rising—this year's crop turned out worse than they thought it would.

OLGA [*greatly pleased*]. Yes? The crop is bad?

[*The DEVIL goes to big chair and kneels on it left.*]

DEVIL. So you do love your husband? You're glad the crop is a failure?

OLGA. Of course I am. [*As if she were somewhat ashamed about her husband's speculations.*] We want the wheat to be bad because that will drive the price up.

KARL. What of that?

OLGA. My husband will make lots of money.

DEVIL [*to OLGA*]. And you will get that new gown.

OLGA. How do you know I want a new dress?

DEVIL. You have a new hat—a very pretty one—and you will certainly want a new dress to wear with it.

OLGA. You must be married.

DEVIL. Married? Not in the least—but I have an eye for feminine vanities. Oh, no! A wife is like a single eyeglass—it looks very nice, but one is better off without it.

OLGA [*right*]. You seem to have

strong views against marriage. May I ask why?

DEVIL [*shaking his finger*]. Because you are plotting matrimony against Karl, and I want to save him.

KARL [*starts toward him; stops center*]. I beg your pardon—

DEVIL. An artist ought never to marry—his wife will swear on the wedding day to stand by his side all through life. The day after the wedding she will stand in his way.

OLGA. Not the real wife.

DEVIL. The real wife is always the other man's wife.

OLGA. You're a cynic.

DEVIL. Oh, no, not cynical, only careful. A tigress who has married—I mean eaten—a man, is no longer dangerous—you can ride on her back through the jungle. But, you must wait till she has married—I mean eaten—somebody; then she is quite safe.

KARL. Better to keep away from the tigress—and stay at home.

DEVIL. Then why didn't *you* stay at home? Why did you refuse a legitimate position—good, everyday morals—a decent occupation at so much a week? You wanted to go into the jungle—and there you are. Now fight your battle—hunt tigers—but don't get married. [*He now changes his tone, goes into the church chair, on whose back he leans his two arms, speaking as if from a pulpit. It is almost dark, and during this scene it becomes darker yet.*] And yet—what a splendid couple you two would make. [*OLGA, standing quite near the DEVIL, but not looking at him, buries her face in her hands.*] Wake up! [*To KARL.*] You, with your talent, your splendid youth!

[*To OLGA.*] You, with your temperament, and beauty and longing!

KARL [*crosses to right*]. Stop! Stop! I beg you—[*OLGA backs to right of back of chair, as though to protect DEVIL.*—for years we have been just good friends.

DEVIL [*now begins to speak in almost a whisper, but gets warmer and warmer, the more embarrassed KARL and OLGA become*]. You may say what you like, but I can read your eyes; they say to me, "Don't believe him, he lies."

[*Goes to fire and warms his hands.* KARL stands below OLGA.]

KARL. Don't interrupt me. For six years we have been—good friends, nothing else. Olga cares nothing for me—and I—and I—

DEVIL [*quickly*]. What will you give me to interrupt you *now*?

OLGA. I don't know what you, who profess to know everything, know about us, but any one who thinks Karl capable of one base thought must be very low and contemptible himself.

DEVIL [*goes behind OLGA and whispers into her ear. At the end of the speech he is a little to the left of them by the big chair*]. It's not a base thought; it's a great thought—a thought that brings joy and warmth and light into your wretched little lives. But joy has its price—and you must pay it, you misers! The drunkard dies of drink, but while he is drunk angels in heaven sing to him. The poet dies in the ecstasy of his sweetest song. It is a coward's bravery that turns away from the wine, the song—and the lips of woman. The smallest candle-end shows you it is worth while to burn

up for the sake of a little warmth—a little light. The only end of life is to burn—to burn yourself up. You must flame and blaze like a torch and toss the fire about you. I know! Your moralists tell you to love one another—don't believe them—your grubby little earth with its paltry million years is not ripe for such a love as that. It can only breed monks, madmen, Methodists. Don't be a fool, be a rogue—but be a jolly rogue—and the world is yours! Look at me! I own the earth. Here is the key of life—love yourself—only yourself. Dress yourself in the softest garments—kiss the sweetest lips—drink of the wine of Life—Drink! Drink! Drink!

[*Bell rings sharply—nobody moves.*]

OLGA [*after a pause, in a low voice*]. My husband!

DEVIL [*steps down from the chair, crossing center, snaps his fingers angrily, and says afterwards, in a cold, cynical tone.*] Mr. Wheat.

[*HEINRICH opens the door, and HERMAN comes in. HEINRICH follows him, but stops short at the door.*]

HERMAN. I'm afraid I'm late. My agent hasn't telephoned me yet, but I didn't want to make you wait too long. Rather dark in here!

[*HEINRICH touches a button, lighting the lights, and exits.*]

HERMAN [*sees the DEVIL, presenting himself*]. I'm Herman Zanden, of Zanden Brothers & Wilde.

[*DEVIL mutters something and shakes hands with him center.*]

OLGA [*coming down right. KARL goes behind big chair*]. Strange man.

HERMAN. Pleased to meet you. [*Converses with KARL a few mo-*

ments; then to OLGA.] Well, my dear, where's the picture? Mayn't I see it?

KARL [*in the big chair, leaning over back*]. There's nothing to see—there is no picture.

HERMAN [*looking at his watch*]. What have you been doing?

KARL. Nothing! [*Silence.*] It's been dark for the last hour.

HERMAN. Yes, but I've been gone two hours.

DEVIL [*steps to the front left center very politely*]. It was all my fault. We have been chatting. We've had a very interesting discussion. And madame was kind enough to invite me for this evening.

HERMAN. Oh! I'm very pleased.

DEVIL [*crosses to couch left and sits*]. Thank you. I have just come from Odessa. I had a talk with the Russian Wheat King. He tells me—

HERMAN. Yes, I've heard; wheat's going up.

OLGA [*frightened*]. Isn't that good for us?

HERMAN. No, dear. I did not tell you this is the first year I am short on wheat.

KARL. What does it mean to be short on wheat?

DEVIL [*seated on couch left*]. It means digging a ditch for others and falling into it yourself. [*To HERMAN.*] I don't think you've any cause for uneasiness. I have inside information that the American crop will be excellent.

HERMAN [*center*]. If that is the case, I shall be safe.

DEVIL. You will be quite safe.

HERMAN. Do you also deal in wheat?

DEVIL. Yes and no. I dabble in

everything. And always at improper moments.

[*Rises.*]

KARL [*has been talking to OLGA, but now goes over to HERMAN*]. I'm afraid I can't come before eleven o'clock this evening.

[*Continues talking to HERMAN, and both go to fire*].

OLGA [*crosses and meets DEVIL, center*]. I must speak to you at once—alone.

[*Looks around as if she wanted to say that her husband and KARL were in the way.*]

DEVIL. Alone? Delighted! [*Crosses by her and goes up center. OLGA goes behind couch and DEVIL addresses HERMAN.*] By the way, if you want to see something delightfully bad, you ought to take a look at the sketch Karl made yesterday of your wife.

HERMAN [*coming down*]. Where is the sketch?

DEVIL. In the studio.

HERMAN [*takes KARL's arm and walks to door of the studio; in going into the studio speaks to KARL*]. I'm sorry you didn't start Olga's portrait to-day. What were you talking about all the time?

[*Goes into studio.*]

DEVIL [*to OLGA*]. I'll wait for you here.

[*He steps back into the room just in time to see MIMI enter from the hall.*]

MIMI [*comes right in, crossing to center*]. Excuse me—

DEVIL. You want to see the painter?

MIMI [*excited*]. Yes, please.

DEVIL [*very gently, pushing MIMI out of the door into the hall and*

speaking through the door]. One minute, my dear. There are some visitors here. Sit down there. I'll call you.

OLGA [*comes quickly from the studio*]. I wanted to tell you—to tell you—

DEVIL [*right center*]. It is not true.

OLGA. What is not true?

DEVIL. Whatever you are going to tell me.

OLGA. But believe me.

DEVIL. Surely no woman can expect that.

OLGA. But I am telling you the truth.

DEVIL. Ah! I might believe you if you said you were *not* speaking the truth.

OLGA. Must I think and speak only as you wish me to?

DEVIL. Not yet. Now what can I do for you?

OLGA [*very earnestly left center*]. Don't come to-night. Now my husband has come, I am myself again, and your manner grates upon me. I had begun to feel as if some strange force—some invisible hand—was clutching me—holding me in spite of myself. There is a mystery about you. It frightens me. I thanked God when I heard that bell ring. He came just in time.

DEVIL. To point a moral and break up a charming party. We were just beginning to understand each other.

OLGA. Oh, please stop!

DEVIL. Are you afraid?

OLGA. No, but I *ask* you not to come to our house this evening.

DEVIL [*with a very polite bow, then drawing himself up*]. I shall come.

OLGA. And if my husband asks you not to come?

DEVIL. Your husband has already asked me to come.

OLGA. And if, in the presence of my husband, I ask you *not* to come?

DEVIL. Well, I'll make a compromise with you. If you repeat your invitation in your husband's presence, I shall accept; if you do not, I will not come.

OLGA [*breathing freely*]. That's nice of you—the first really nice thing you've said. I like you much better.

[KARL and HERMAN come back from the studio, and HERMAN starts to talk at once to the DEVIL. KARL goes toward OLGA, who meets him up center. To HERMAN]. Shall we go?

HERMAN. Yes, dear; put your coat on.

[Comes down left. DEVIL crosses to HERMAN.]

KARL [*meets OLGA, they go up to recess. He helps OLGA to put her coat on*]. I see now how bad the sketch is.

[Holds mirror for OLGA while she puts her hat on.]

OLGA. Please don't look at me like that.

KARL. Even if I don't look at you, I see you just the same, Olga.

OLGA [*covering her face with her hand*]. We must give up the portrait, Karl. . . . I'm going away . . . away somewhere.

DEVIL [*left, with HERMAN*]. You don't say? You represent Holman & Co. in London? When I am in Odessa I am always old Mr. Holman's guest. A charming old gentleman. No doubt you have heard the rumors. It seems they've been mixed

up with some unfortunate ventures which have seriously affected their standing.

HERMAN [*seated on couch*]. Strange! Another friend of mine spoke to me about it only yesterday.

DEVIL. Yes, but that isn't all. He's the president of some trust company, and in order to boom the stocks he—but it's a long story, I won't bore you with it now.

[*Makes as if he wants to go.*]

HERMAN. My dear sir, this concerns me more than I can tell you. The fact is—I—I am heavily interested.

[*OLGA has her hat on and turns, listening to HERMAN and the DEVIL.*]

DEVIL. You don't say. But it's a long story.

HERMAN. Well, then—to-night.

DEVIL. Oh, I am so sorry. I have excused myself already to madame, but I had forgotten all about a call I must pay at the Russian Embassy this evening.

HERMAN. Well, lunch with me to-morrow.

DEVIL [*with a gesture of regret*]. I'm afraid it will be impossible. I leave to-morrow at nine o'clock for—Spain.

HERMAN [*to himself*]. H'm! I must have this information. [*HERMAN crosses to center, speaking to his wife.*] My dear, won't you please ask the Doctor to try and arrange to come to our house this evening?

OLGA [*somewhat embarrassed*]. Well, but if pressing business. . . .

DEVIL [*left center*]. It is not so very pressing. Of course, it would mean a little sacrifice.

HERMAN [*center, looking at OLGA*]. Well—

OLGA [*right center*]. Much as I would like to see you, Doctor, I cannot ask you to sacrifice anything for our sake.

DEVIL [*as if suddenly remembering something*]. Come to think of it, the Russian Ambassador left town yesterday, so if madame—

HERMAN [*goes up center. DEVIL crosses to her right center*]. Well, my dear?

OLGA [*in a tone of resignation*]. I hope we shall have the pleasure this evening—

DEVIL [*crosses to OLGA*]. Pardon me. You said—

OLGA [*very slowly*]. I hope we shall have the pleasure of your company this evening?

[*Goes to door right.*]

DEVIL [*ironically*]. Madame, I thank you for your invitation; I shall be most charmed.

HERMAN [*coming down to KARL*]. And you don't come before eleven?

KARL [*by big chair*]. No, I expect an art dealer.

HERMAN [*suggestively*]. I know your art dealers. Fie! And you going to be married.

OLGA [*curiously, and a bit jealous*]. What is it?

KARL. Oh, nothing.

DEVIL [*up center, as if listening*]. I think somebody knocked at the door.

HERMAN. I didn't hear anything.

DEVIL. Yes, there it goes again. [*Cynically.*] Probably the art dealer. [*Goes to hall door, which he opens, steps out, speaking into the hall.*] Oh, it's you, my dear. Come in.

[*Swings MIMI into room past OLGA, landing her center.*]

MIMI [*as she comes in, embarrassed*]. Good evening.

[HEINRICH *enters from studio.*]

KARL [*up center embarrassed*].
Good evening.

[MIMI *goes up left.*]

DEVIL [*right center, in a low tone to HERMAN*]. We'd better go. [MIMI and OLGA *stare at one another. Cynically to HERMAN.*] The art dealer!

HERMAN [*laughing, going to door*].
Well, *au revoir*.

[*Exits.*]

DEVIL [*to OLGA*]. Quite a little comedy.

OLGA [*at door right*]. You think so?

KARL [*to MIMI, pointing to the studio*]. Please step in there, Fraulein. I'll be with you in a minute.

[KARL *turns to OLGA with hand outstretched, as if to say good-bye. OLGA pretends not to see it and bows coldly.*]

DEVIL [*whispers to OLGA*]. You were good enough to invite me for this evening; I am now going to repay your kindness. In five minutes I shall be back here to interrupt this tête-à-tête. Watch me forget my overcoat.

[*He takes the overcoat which KARL had put on a chair at the beginning of the act when he came in. HEINRICH helps the DEVIL to put on the overcoat, but notices that it is his master's.*]

HEINRICH. Pardon, sir, but this is not your overcoat. This—

DEVIL [*aside to HEINRICH*]. Shut up!

[DEVIL *goes off; HEINRICH follows him out.*]

KARL [*comes center to MIMI*]. Didn't I promise you I'd come? What do you want?

MIMI [*coming to him*]. Were you ashamed to have those people see me?

KARL. I told you I'd come. What more do you want?

MIMI. I was downstairs in the lunch room and thought it all over. Dear Karl, don't be mean—don't get married.

KARL. But—Mimi!

MIMI. I never used to care, but now that I've seen those people—I—I can't bear it. Don't get married!

[*Cries.*]

KARL. You mustn't cry—it spoils your beauty.

MIMI. Oh, I'm a fool.

KARL. Now, you're talking sense.

MIMI. I've been a silly girl—but it's all over now. I'm sensible again. You are going to settle down and marry Elsa and be the most famous portrait painter in all Europe.

KARL. Mimi, child—don't speak of portraits. I feel at this moment as if I never wanted to hear the word portrait again. I'd like to run away from everything, Mimi. What do you say? [*Goes to couch left and sits.*]

Suppose you and I get married and go away—far away into the country—or to the United States, where we'd never be heard of again.

MIMI [*kneels beside him*]. Do you mean that?

KARL [*recklessly*]. Yes—yes!

MIMI [*gives him her hand*]. That's mighty nice of you, Karl. [*Rises, goes left center.*] But no! even if you really mean it—which you don't—

[*Makes an effort to control herself.*]

KARL [*interrupting*]. Mimi!

MIMI. No, Karl. I'd only keep you back—you must marry in your

own set. [*Changes tone.*] But don't run away—with—with anybody. Good-bye.

KARL. No, don't go! Now you have come, you might as well stay a while—take your hat off. [*Helps her off with her hat and jacket.*] I'm glad you came back. Now, let's be sensible—and talk it over. You know I really am fond of you—after all, I *am* your best friend and you are my—my—

[*The DEVIL has silently opened the door and comes in.*]

DEVIL. My—my overcoat must be somewhere. Your stupid servant gave me yours. [*Takes coat off.*] It's funny, but every time I come here, you are helping some lady to take off her things.

MIMI [*goes to couch. Horrified.*] Well, I never.

[*Exits.*]

DEVIL. You have every qualification for a ladies' tailor.

KARL. You are very kind.

DEVIL. Don't mention it.

KARL [*impolitely*]. I'll fetch your overcoat; I don't want to detain you.

[*Puts out lights and goes toward studio.*]

DEVIL. The hanger was torn off. I asked your man to mend it and bring it here when it was done. [*Sits up center. Silence.*] I just saw something very touching.

KARL. What?

[*Goes to center and sits on arm of chair by DEVIL.*]

DEVIL. The way that woman clung to her husband's arm as if for protection.

KARL. For protection? [*Sneeringly.*] From you?

DEVIL. Look here, my boy; do

you think you are wise to be such a fool?

[*KARL rises, starts away. DEVIL catches him by hand.*]

KARL. I don't want to talk about it. You don't seem to understand my position. I have seen this woman for years every day, and I never even thought—and if I had thought—I should have laughed at myself.

DEVIL [*rises, takes both KARL's hands*]. Look at her! She's yours. Think what it means—joy, unspeakable joy—the most supreme joy one can have. And to think that you are too lazy to stretch out your hand! Why, another one would toil day and night, would risk life and limb for such a prize—and it just drops at your feet—a windfall.

KARL. I suppose that's why— [*In a tone as if he didn't think much of it.*]—just a windfall.

[*Sits on couch.*]

DEVIL [*sits on table left center*]. Last fall, on the sixth of September—I shall never forget the date—something strange happened to me. I put on an old suit I hadn't worn for a long time, and as I picked up the waistcoat, a sovereign fell out. God knows how long it had been there. As I turned this sovereign over to look at it, it suddenly slipped through my fingers and rolled away. I looked and looked, but my sovereign was gone. I become nervous: I can't find the sovereign. I search around for half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, still I can't find it. I get angry, I get furious. I shift the furniture—no sovereign. I call my man—we both look everywhere until it's dark. I'm perspiring and trembling—I have but one idea: I must get that sovereign back. Suddenly a

suspicion comes into my mind—I get up from my knees. I scream at the top of my voice to my servant, “You thief, you have found the sovereign and put it into your pocket.” The man gets angry and answers me disrespectfully. I am about to strike him when I see the blade of a knife shining in his hands. I draw my revolver—[*Takes a shining revolver out of his pocket and rises.*]—and with this revolver I nearly killed a man for a sovereign—[*KARL looks at him.*]—I didn’t need and had never missed—just a found sovereign.

[*Puts revolver on table.*]

KARL [*embarrassed*]. I give found money away.

[*Turns from him on couch.*]

DEVIL. I would have given it away, but—it slipped through my fingers, and whatever slips through our fingers, is just the one thing we want. [*Goes to KARL.*] We break our necks for it—that’s human nature. And if it once slips through your fingers, you will run after your found sovereign. And then, when it is too late, you will discover it was worth having.

KARL. To draw a revolver for a found sovereign?

DEVIL [*sitting by him*]. And that little woman will become dearer and more precious to you every day—you will realize that she could have given you wings—that her temperament, her beauty, her passion, would have been the inspiration of your work—all this you’ll realize when she has slipped away. You could have become a master—a giant! Not by loving your art, but by loving her—but you won’t know it till it is too late—too late. [*He now takes the shawl with which OLGA had draped*

her shoulders.] This shawl has touched her bosom— [*Throws one end over KARL’s shoulder, forcing him to see it. KARL clasps the shawl and touches his lips to it.*] Think what you might have been to one another! What divine happiness, not because she is beautiful—no, but because you—

KARL [*throws shawl left of couch*]. Be quiet! Be quiet! Do you want to drive me mad?

DEVIL [*rises and goes to head of couch*]. A life that has not been squandered—has not been lived—

KARL. Why do you tell me all this? Why? What do you want? [*Throws himself face down on couch.*] What do you want? [*Horrified, turns to him.*] Who sent you?

DEVIL [*darkly*]. Nobody! No one! I am here.

[*Touches KARL’s forehead.*]

KARL. No! And a thousand times no. [*Throws himself face down again on couch. Screams loudly.*] No! Do you hear me? No! I have known her all these years, and we’ve been good friends only—and we’ll remain good friends, nothing else. I don’t want the found sovereign!

[*Moving to end of couch.*]

DEVIL [*coming down left of couch; very emphatically*]. And if it slips away? [*Silence. Then quickly.*] If another man runs away with it—?

KARL [*suddenly jumping at a conclusion*]. Who?

[*Looks at the DEVIL.*]

DEVIL [*triumphant*]. I.

[*Silence.*]

KARL. You?

[*Laughs and turns from him.*]

DEVIL. To-night! This very night she'll be mine! [*Laughs.*] Oh, what joy! What exquisite joy! For ten thousand years I have had no prettier mistress!

KARL [*turning to him*]. What do you say?

DEVIL [*sitting left head of couch*]. Mistress, I said. Come to-night—to her house—when the lights are burning—when the air seems to be filled with music and perfume. You'll see—before day dawns.

KARL. Enough! Enough!

DEVIL. How you will run after your lost sovereign! Every hour when you wonder where she is, she spends with me. A carriage passes: your heart stands still. Who's in the carriage? Shall I tell you? We! You see a couple vanish around a corner, clinging lovingly to one another. Who were they? We! Always we. A light goes out in some window. Who put that light out? We! We sit in every carriage, we vanish around every corner—clinging lovingly together; we stand behind every window curtain in close embrace, looking into your tortured face, your maddened eyes—and we cling

closer—closer—and we laugh—we laugh!

[*Laughs long.*]

KARL [*throws himself face down, back to audience, on couch, in terrible state of excitement, screaming at top of his voice*]. You fiend!

[*Reaches for revolver with right hand. DEVIL grabs his hand and holds revolver. KARL draws away and sits staring straight ahead. DEVIL rises, leaves revolver on table, lights cigarette, then comes below table. HEINRICH enters the room noiselessly, carrying a lighted candle, goes behind the DEVIL and helps him put his fur coat on.*]

DEVIL [*puts his silk hat on, gives a tip to HEINRICH, takes up the revolver, puts it into his pocket, and says to KARL with a sad smile, in a warm tone like a father speaking to his son*]. You see, my boy, one may draw a revolver for a lost sovereign.

[*Goes to the door. As he opens the door, a look of devilish satisfaction comes into his eyes.*]

CURTAIN

BURLINGAME

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ACT TWO

[SCENE: *A conservatory in Zanden's house. The left side of the stage as well as the whole back of the stage is taken up by large bay windows, through which the garden and the wall surrounding the house can be seen. It is winter. Bright weather, but it has been snowing. In the garden, as well as in the street, electric lamps. On the right side of the stage*

there are two doors, one quite near to the footlights, leading into the apartment—one in the rear, leading to the hall. There is a platform about two yards long and two yards wide, between these two doors. Five steps lead from this platform toward the footlights, and five steps on the side of the platform to the middle of the stage. On the top of the platform a

door leading to the ballroom. When this door is opened waltz-music can be heard. At the foot of the stairs, about three yards from the footlights, two square columns having a brass ornament with eight electric lamps attached. There are plants and flowers about the room. Two chairs and a table stand on the right side of the stage, about three yards from the footlights, two chairs and a table on the left side of the stage, about five yards from the footlights. There are two settees, left and right. On the table, left, writing material. It is about one o'clock at night. Guests in fancy costumes are moving about as the curtain goes up.]

FIRST LADY GUEST [*sitting left of table right*]. Who is the dark man you left so suddenly in the ballroom?

SECOND LADY GUEST [*enters and comes down stairs to back of table left*]. I don't know his name.

FIRST LADY GUEST. A most disagreeable man.

SECOND LADY GUEST [*crosses to group left center*]. Oh, dreadful! He behaved shockingly to my husband. He told him that it would be so cold to-night that his teeth would shiver in their box.

FIRST LADY GUEST. Olga tells me he is a friend of Herr Karl's, and she only invited him as a compliment to him.

SECOND LADY GUEST [*stout*]. He insisted on telling me of a remedy for obesity. I don't consider myself stout—do you?

ELSA [*center, laughingly*]. No! I think I'm just right. He sounds interesting—I'd like to meet him.

FIRST LADY GUEST. You'll be sorry if you do.

ELSA. Oh, indeed.

SECOND LADY GUEST. He'll be very disagreeable, I assure you.

ELSA. I'm not afraid of him.

[*Wants to go up steps.*]

FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST [*left center*]. Miss Elsa, I really think you had better not.

SECOND LADY GUEST. If Miss Elsa wants to speak to him, let her do so. I think she is the only one really capable of putting him in his place.

THIRD LADY GUEST [*seated left of table right*]. Oh, she'll make him sit up.

ELSA. Thanks, awfully. Oh, I know what you call me— The Blue-stocking— Sassy Elsa—

SECOND LADY GUEST. Elsa, I never said you were a blue-stocking.

FIRST LADY GUEST. I never called you Sassy Elsa.

ELSA. But I am—you know I am — [*Pointing at herself*]. That's why nobody dares to tell me how to get thin.

SECOND LADY GUEST. What impertinence!

ELSA. Well—you asked for it.

SECOND LADY GUEST [*to FIRST LADY GUEST*]. It will serve her right if—

ELSA [*on the stairs*]. I'd just like to see him—

[*The DEVIL is standing in front of her. Everybody is silent.*]

DEVIL [*in evening dress, red carnation in buttonhole; after some silence*]. I never dreamed how quiet it could be when seven ladies are not talking. [*Protesting movement on the part of the GUESTS.*] Oh, I know—you have been very merciful to me in my absence.

ELSA [*on stairs*]. You needn't think I am afraid to say what I think to your face. I was just about to—

[*She makes a movement showing*

that she wanted to look for him.]

DEVIL. You did well to stay. They would have said much worse things about you—they would have spoken about your approaching engagement to Karl.

ELSA. What! *[Astonished.]* You know?

DEVIL. To my friend Karl—they want to throw you into his arms. *[The others laugh. In a low voice to ELSA.]* I'd like to speak to you—alone.

ELSA. Here?

[Gesture that she thinks this impossible in a crowded room.]

DEVIL. We'll be alone in no time.

[ELSA goes to sofa and sits left of table left.]

FOURTH LADY GUEST *[crosses to him; to DEVIL]*. I'm very glad you spoke that way to Elsa. You have quite won me over, and I don't mind telling you I came *very* near having to pick a bone with you.

DEVIL *[right center, to FOURTH LADY GUEST, who is very thin—looking at her from head to foot]*. By the way, speaking of *bones*—

FOURTH LADY GUEST. What! Again! Oh!

[Walks off highly offended.]

FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST *[very effeminate, smiling to the DEVIL]*. Bravo! I couldn't do that—not that I lack courage. I am famous for my courage—I just love a fight—I once slapped the face of an athlete who dared to insult a lady.

DEVIL. You coward!

FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST. What—coward?

DEVIL. Yes, coward. If you dared to slap the face of a cripple I might admire your courage.

[FIRST GENTLEMAN GUEST starts to answer, but afterwards makes a gesture seeming to say nothing can be done with the DEVIL—going off slowly up the stairs.]

SECOND GENTLEMAN GUEST *[after a few seconds of talking quietly to the DEVIL]*. Oh-h-h! You are a free-thinker. So am I!

DEVIL *[as if astonished]*. You think?

SECOND GENTLEMAN GUEST. I do.

DEVIL. What with? *[Exit SECOND GENTLEMAN GUEST, angrily. To SECOND LADY GUEST, the stout one, seated right of table left.]* A pity you don't dance—there's nothing like it for reducing the figure.

[SECOND LADY GUEST rushes off.]

DEVIL *[left, to the THIRD LADY GUEST, pointing at FOURTH]*. Her husband must be in the furniture business.

THIRD LADY GUEST. Yes, who told you?

DEVIL. Her dress—it is the very latest pattern for armchairs and settees—but please don't say I said so.

THIRD LADY GUEST *[smiling]*. Certainly not. *[Goes to chair of FIRST LADY GUEST.]* Jane—

DEVIL *[joins ELSA. To ELSA]*. Look—she's telling her.

THIRD LADY GUEST *[to FIRST LADY GUEST]*. But promise me not to be angry.

DEVIL. She promises.

FIRST LADY GUEST. I promise.

THIRD LADY GUEST. He said that—

DEVIL. Look out for the explosion.

FIRST LADY GUEST *[rises]*. Oh, I never—

DEVIL. Now—watch her go.

FIRST LADY GUEST. I never—

[*Goes off over the staircase.*]

THIRD LADY GUEST [*going after her*]. But, Jane, you promised me—
[*Exits.*]

DEVIL. *Voilà!* I am now at your disposal.

ELSA [*on settee left*]. Aren't you surprised I haven't gone? You insulted me, too. I only stay because I want to speak to you.

DEVIL [*left center, ironically*]. Charmed, I'm sure.

ELSA. Oh, don't try to be polite—just be yourself. I'm not afraid of you.

DEVIL. I know it.

ELSA [*crosses up to center*]. Perhaps you know my nickname—Saucy Elsa?

[*DEVIL nods his head.*]

DEVIL. Yes.

ELSA. Politeness would only embarrass me—and I have chosen you to deliver a message to that crowd—only because you can be so delightfully rude.

DEVIL. I am at your entire disposal.

ELSA. Now, how can I be saucy when you talk like that?

DEVIL. I am your devoted servant.

ELSA. You're impossible.

DEVIL. Shall we end this conference?

[*DEVIL starts up center.*]

ELSA [*goes to table right center and leans against it*]. Not yet, please. You informed me just now that I am the girl they want to throw into the arms of your friend Karl.

DEVIL. Yes.

ELSA. You forget to say I am the girl who *allows* herself to be thrown in your friend's arms. Is that right?

DEVIL. Yes.

ELSA [*stands and pushes forward chair*]. Please sit down.

[*DEVIL bows, but remains standing.*]

ELSA [*crosses and sits. In a very loud voice*]. Please sit down. I don't ask you out of politeness, but because I want to set you right in this matter—and it is much easier for me to set you right when you sit down and I stand up. I don't want people to make fun of me—I know what they say—do you understand me?

DEVIL [*gets up*]. I do.

ELSA. Sit down, please. [*He does so.*] I don't want people to smile and congratulate me to my face, and laugh behind my back. I won't have it—and as you started this subject I shall entrust you with the mission of enlightening our friends out there.

DEVIL. Your confidence honors me.

ELSA. Don't think for a moment that I have taken these people seriously—I have no more interest in them than I have in yesterday's newspaper. But I don't choose to have them think that they have fooled me into marrying Karl. And—

DEVIL [*starts to rise. She stops him*]. Pardon me.

ELSA. I see through their scheme. But I shall marry him just the same, if he will have me. Do you understand me? I shall marry him—

DEVIL. Pardon me. I don't think you will.

ELSA. You will see.

DEVIL. You have been kind enough to honor me with your confidence, and now I will be quite frank with you. This marriage cannot come off.

[*Stands up.*]

ELSA [*points to chair*]. Please sit down.

DEVIL [*takes her hands and swings her into chair*]. No! You will sit down now because I am going to set you right. I know the reason for this marriage—but you— [A MANSERVANT crosses stage; DEVIL calls him.] You will find in my overcoat a small leather satchel—bring it here. [MANSERVANT goes off. Continuing to ELISA.] But you don't know the reason—or you don't want to know it. And you are about to consent to—

ELISA [*interrupting*]. To what? To marry a man who is not madly in love with me—any more than I am with him. What of it? We are two perfectly sane people about to make a serious contract with our eyes wide open, instead of blinded by infatuation like crazy lovers in magazine stories. What other contract made by crazy people would be valid for one minute? And *this* is for a lifetime—

[Enter SERVANT, hands bag to DEVIL and exits.]

DEVIL [*smiling*]. True—for a lifetime.

ELISA. You are a man of the world?

DEVIL [*gravely*]. Of many worlds.

ELISA [*looks up quickly as if about to ask the DEVIL what he means, but checks herself and continues*]. Well, in this world—is it the man who chooses the woman, or the woman who chooses the man?

DEVIL [*smiling*]. We are the weaker sex.

ELISA. Answer me! Which chooses?

DEVIL. The man sometimes chooses the engagement ring—

ELISA [*holding up her head proudly, and looking her very prettiest, straight into his eyes*]. Look at me, please.

[The DEVIL looks into her eyes.]

ELSA [*proudly*]. Now tell me, can I or can I not choose the man I will marry?

DEVIL [*leaning on table right, in a courtly manner*]. It is written in your eyes—but—I never thought this subject would excite you so.

ELSA [*seated left of him, with animation*]. I won't be laughed at—I don't care what those people think [*Becoming excited*]. I know what I am doing, and in spite of everything I choose to become his wife.

DEVIL [*takes out little red satchel and opens it*]. Why?

ELSA [*beginning to lose control of herself*]. Because—because— [*Breaks down*].—because I love him.

[*Begins to sob bitterly*.]

DEVIL. Allow me— [*Takes a little handkerchief out of the satchel and gives it to her*]. I always carry this with me—it's my weeping satchel—everything a woman needs for weeping.

ELSA [*weeps a little harder, wiping her eyes with the handkerchief*]. I love him.

[*During the following dialogue the DEVIL takes out of the weeping satchel a little looking-glass, small comb, powder and puff, and gives her one after another*.]

DEVIL. And *this* is Saucy Elsa!

ELSA. No. Until to-night I was a young girl afraid of nobody—now I feel like an old woman. [*Takes mirror*]. What am I to do?

[*Looks, smiles quickly*.]

DEVIL. Don't be discouraged. You will have to fight—you must attack the enemy. But first you must be pretty.

ELSA [*takes puff and powder from him*]. I shall try to.

DEVIL [*reaches out for it*]. You must show a bold front—you will perhaps feel that it is hard for a young girl to fight a woman—your weapons are not quite so numerous as those of the married woman—who knows love already—who understands—may I say something shocking?

[*During this speech ELSA hands back or the DEVIL takes all the articles except the handkerchief.*]

ELSA [*looks at him, opening her eyes widely*]. Do you ever say anything that *isn't*?

[*Gives him handkerchief, rises.*]

DEVIL. Well, I won't. But remember, you have one weapon which will deal the death blow to the most attractive woman—to the woman who knows every card in the game of love—that one weapon is purity.

ELSA. This sounds strange from you!

DEVIL. All the same—it may do you some good. And now—go dance with Karl—but don't try to be a woman, be a girl. Don't try to be saucy.

ELSA [*left center*]. I'm not really saucy—I'm afraid it's only a pose—

DEVIL. *Don't* pose. Be yourself—be bashful—look at the young man as if you were only waiting for a pirate to steal you away from girl-land—and show you the way into Woman's Land. Head high, my little girl—that's it—and if anybody dares to call you saucy again, tell him that you once met a gentleman at a ball to whom you thought to give a piece of your mind that would make him feel very, very small—and instead

you left with a piece of his mind that made you feel very, very small—and made him feel—as if he were the greatest scoundrel in the world—[*Taking a few steps to the footlights.*]—which perhaps he is.

[*ELSA goes up the stairs, as KARL appears on the top of the stairs. DEVIL is standing at this moment behind one of the columns unseen by KARL—but quite near ELSA.*]

ELSA [*turns toward the DEVIL, showing her back to KARL*]. So you don't want me to be saucy?

DEVIL [*whispering*]. No.

[*ELSA goes up one step.*]

KARL [*on top step*]. Oh, Elsa, there you are!

ELSA [*dropping her eyelids*]. Yes.

KARL. Why aren't you in the ball-room?

ELSA. I wanted to be alone. If anybody *wants* me he can find me. [*To DEVIL, whispers.*] Is that better?

KARL. You look sad. Are you worried?

DEVIL [*whispering to ELSA*]. Say no.

ELSA [*leaning against pillar right*]. No.

KARL [*coming down*]. What has happened? [*Sees the DEVIL. DEVIL comes from behind pillar between them, meets KARL on lower step.*] Oh, I understand—

DEVIL [*finishing KARL's sentence*].—nothing.

[*Goes up stairs.*]

KARL [*nearing ELSA*]. You look lovely, Elsa. Do you know, this pensive air is very becoming to you—you've always been so cold and—haughty—it's like finding a little white flower under the deep snow;

you want to pick it up and kiss it—
[*Takes both of ELSA's hands in his.*]
This is the Elsa for me!

ELSA [*ashamed*]. Karl!

DEVIL. You will excuse me. I must pay my respects to our hostess.

[*He goes off quickly.* KARL and

ELSA *sit down on the left side of the stage.*]

ELSA. I don't like that man. Who is he?

[*Sits right of table left.*]

KARL [*sits on sofa left.*] A casual acquaintance who insists upon posing as my friend. Don't let us talk about him. I'm glad I found you here—something natural in this stifling artificial atmosphere. Doesn't it seem close to you?

ELSA. Yes, as if some hot wind had passed through these rooms—it seems to take my breath away.

KARL. I've never heard you speak like that before. Why have you tried to hide your real self from me?

[*DEVIL appears on the platform, with OLGA. They come down the steps.*]

OLGA. Hadn't we better leave the young couple alone?

DEVIL. You are much too considerate.

ELSA [*to KARL*]. Olga—I suppose you'd like to speak to her?

KARL. I much prefer to talk to you.

[*They continue talking. DEVIL and OLGA come down. She sits on sofa right, DEVIL in chair right.*]

OLGA. They seem to have found each other.

DEVIL. Possibly. Are you sorry?

OLGA. Oh, no.

DEVIL. Shall we leave?

OLGA. No, I like to see my plan bearing fruit.

[*They continue speaking slowly.*]

ELSA. They are speaking about us.

KARL. What do we care? Let's be happy—Elsa! I feel as if I had never known you before to-night.

ELSA [*moves chair so she can hide OLGA from KARL. DEVIL repeats business*]. Why do you keep looking over there?

KARL. Oh, that's only—I was quite unconscious—

[*They continue speaking slowly.*]

OLGA. Let's talk about something else. You are very naughty. You have come here in spite of my—

DEVIL [*smiling*]. Invitation. I would have respected your wish but for one very good reason—I made a bold wager this afternoon.

OLGA. What?

DEVIL. I made a bet that you would fall in love with me this evening.

OLGA. Made a bet that I would fall in love with you? And with whom did you bet?

DEVIL. Karl.

OLGA. Karl? [*Quickly.*] And what did he say?

DEVIL. His answer was curious. I had better not tell you—I am afraid it would hurt you.

OLGA. No, it won't. Please tell me.

[*Turns and looks at KARL.*]

DEVIL [*following her glance*]. Well, perhaps later. Your little plan bids fair to succeed.

OLGA [*looking away quickly*]. I had forgotten their existence. [*Changing the conversation quickly. DEVIL pats OLGA's hands.*] You have fascinating eyes.

[*During the following few words*

between ELSA and KARL, the DEVIL whispers into the ear of OLGA, stroking her hand gently in order to arouse KARL's jealousy.]

KARL. I never saw you look so charming.

ELSA. I feel as if I had changed. Perhaps you have something to do with it.

DEVIL. You seem like a different woman this evening—there is something about you—

OLGA. It is because I am with somebody I don't quite understand—but who seems to me a man in every sense of the word.

[This last a little louder, for KARL's benefit.]

DEVIL. Your confession is charming. But I should be more ready to believe it, if you hadn't made it.

[DEVIL kisses OLGA's hand.]

KARL. Our first love is generally our last, but our last love always our first—don't you think so?

ELSA. I don't know. I've never been really in love before—but have twice been disillusioned.

DEVIL. Love at first sight—

[The following eight sentences are spoken very rapidly, almost at the same time.]

OLGA *[distracted]*. You are right—for the first sight—that is to say—

KARL *[now always looking at OLGA—OLGA always looking at KARL; the DEVIL looking pleased, ELSA looking furious]*. Disillusions—well—yes, disillusions—are disillusions.

DEVIL. I should hate to have to give an account of myself.

OLGA. Yes, indeed—but, of course—it's all a matter of taste.

ELSA. The way girls are brought up nowadays—

KARL. Exactly! Our bringing up—that is—I mean to say—of course—of course.

OLGA. We mustn't forget—

KARL. I quite agree with you—if—if you know what I mean.

ELSA *[getting up quickly and slapping her hand on the table]*. No, I don't know what you mean. *[Crosses to stairs.]* Take me to the ballroom—I'm engaged for the next dance.

KARL *[also rising]*. Well—

ELSA *[almost crying, insisting]*. Let us go—I wish to go—

[She goes toward the stairs; KARL follows her, goes up side stairs, meeting her at the top as she passes OLGA.]

OLGA. Oh! you are not in the ballroom.

ELSA *[saucily]*. Can't you see?

OLGA. You'd better hurry, dear.

ELSA. I hate dancing, but I shan't miss one single dance to-night, just to spite some people. I shall dance to the last step.

[ELSA looks at OLGA in a very impertinent way. OLGA steps forward as if to give a reply, when KARL comes between them; offers his arm to ELSA. Exit ELSA and KARL up the staircase.]

OLGA *[angry]*. Did you hear that?

DEVIL. I did.

OLGA *[rises, goes center]*. What language! How dare she—she must think he loves her!

DEVIL *[rises, goes to her center]*. Wait! I'll tell you now what Karl said to me this afternoon.

OLGA. When you wanted to bet?

DEVIL. When I bet you would fall in love with me. *[After a short silence.]* He wanted to shoot me.

OLGA [*trying to hide her joy*]. Karl!

DEVIL. Karl, with his own hands—with this pistol— [*Takes revolver out of his pocket.*] I took it away from him.

OLGA. Karl wanted to kill you—why, Doctor Miller—

DEVIL [*patting revolver*]. Yes, with this simple prescription—six pills.

[*Puts revolver back in pocket.*]

OLGA. This afternoon, when you only spoke about me—he wanted to kill you—and now when he saw us here—saw you whisper in my ear—saw you take my hand—[*Goes left to where KARL and ELSA had sat.*] He must be in love with her.

DEVIL [*crossing to left center*]. Don't you think a man's a fool to try to shoot his friend on account of a woman?

OLGA. Oh! Karl's not a fool—he thinks the world of me. And you must have said things— But there is no doubt—that he and Elsa—like—perhaps love each other.

DEVIL [*very cold, leaning over chair at table left*]. Strange! Your being so annoyed at the apparent success of your pet scheme.

OLGA. You think it will succeed?

DEVIL. I don't know. But it's easy enough to find out.

OLGA. How?

DEVIL. This afternoon, when I told him I'd make you fall in love with me, he wanted to shoot— That's love—don't talk to me about respect and thinking the world of you— They may fire cannons out of respect, but pistols—no—that's love every time. [OLGA protesting silently as if the matter was not quite important enough.] Of course, I know—this

only interests you because it was you who planned the marriage, and after all you take a pride in the success of your scheme. Am I right?

OLGA [*center near him*]. Yes, yes.

DEVIL [*behind pillar center*]. Karl shall tell us himself which was the real thing—the attempted murder of this afternoon, or this little—flirtation with Elsa.

OLGA. You don't mean to ask him—[DEVIL shakes his head slowly, smiling.]—you don't mean to listen?

DEVIL. Certainly not.

OLGA. What then?

DEVIL. Very simple. But you must take my advice unconditionally—ask for no reasons—do exactly what I tell you.

OLGA [*after careful reflection, slowly*]. Y-e-s.

DEVIL. I think I remember having seen you once at the Opera in a very beautiful cloak—fur—was it not?—and cloth—

OLGA. Yes.

DEVIL. With a long train? You must put that cloak on—close it as high as you can—and wrap yourself in it as if you were feeling cold. Only show the tips of your shoes—then come back here— [OLGA starts toward him, looking at him as if she wanted to ask the reason.] No questions.

OLGA. It's all very, very mysterious, but when you look at me that way, I—I—can't refuse . . . your eyes seem to have all the world's wisdom behind them.

DEVIL. You have a poor opinion of me.

OLGA [*turns from him*]. Shall I go at once?

DEVIL. At once. And if any one

remarks on it, say you felt cold in the conservatory.

OLGA [*doubtfully*]. But suppose he says . . .

DEVIL [*interrupting*]. Quick! He's coming.

[KARL *is coming down the stairs toward the footlights. OLGA has gone to the side stairs so that KARL cannot see her. She rushes off when he comes down the stairs.*]

KARL [*who has not seen her—hears the rustling of the silk and runs to the side stairs and looks off right*]. Who was that?

DEVIL. Who?

KARL [*coming down to center*]. Somebody just ran out—does she want to avoid me?

DEVIL [*goes right, lights cigarette*]. Nobody ran away from *me*. A very pretty girl, Miss Elsa!

KARL [*goes to window left*]. Yes.
[*Silence.*]

DEVIL. What's the matter?

KARL. Oh, nothing—I am not in particularly good humor—but why should I be?

DEVIL [*lights a cigarette; offers one to KARL*]. Will you have one?

KARL [*roughly*]. No, thank you.
[*Uncomfortable silence.*]

DEVIL. You seem annoyed—

KARL [*comes back center, as if in a mood to quarrel*]. Do you want to know why?

DEVIL. No.

KARL [*nervous*]. Well, I'll tell you—

DEVIL [*as if he wanted to go away and evade the conversation*]. Better keep it to yourself.

KARL. But I will tell you. I'm astonished at the change that has come over you since this afternoon.

I admit it upsets me, but don't imagine it is on Olga's account—if you don't mind, we'll leave her out of the discussion.

DEVIL. By all means.

KARL. I've made up my mind to propose to Elsa.

DEVIL [*holds out his hand in an approving tone, takes KARL's hand and shakes it*]. I am very, very glad.

KARL. You are glad?

DEVIL. I am indeed. [KARL *stares at him*.] What's the matter with you?

KARL [*approaching the DEVIL threateningly*]. Look here, that was Olga who ran away just now.

DEVIL. Don't be absurd. [Looking at floor as if his secret was discovered.] Why should she run away from me—

KARL. You behave like a school-boy.

DEVIL. What do you mean?

KARL. I mean, my dear Doctor—that you are not a gentleman.

DEVIL. I don't quite follow you.

KARL. When a gentleman would be discreet—he even conceals his discretion.

DEVIL. Very thoughtless of me—but since you have found me out—By the way, what you said about your marriage—is it settled?

KARL [*center*]. It is.

DEVIL. You will not change your mind?

KARL. I shall not.

[*Crosses to settee left and sits.*]

DEVIL [*sits in chair left*]. Very good. Now I can tell you in confidence about—look here, you are quite sure you won't change, your mind?

KARL. No fear. What is it you want to tell me? Tell me everything.

I'd like to learn some of the tricks of the trade. I may need them—

DEVIL. Tricks of the trade? This from a man about to marry? I'm shocked.

KARL [*ironically*]. You look it. What did you want to tell me about her?

DEVIL. About *her*?

KARL. About Olga.

DEVIL [*looks to the ground as if he were ashamed*]. Oh, nothing.

KARL. Look here, I don't mind telling you her husband is—

DEVIL. Deaf, blind, dumb.

KARL [*concealing his pain very badly*]. And to think—and this afternoon—at my house—was the first time—

DEVIL. She's a wonder! Believe me, Karl, she's a wonder. It's just possible she's good—a dash of goodness won't hurt a pretty woman—but I hope not. I should then have to attribute my conquest to hypnotism—and that doesn't flatter my vanity. What do you think? We had agreed—just now when she ran away—ah—

[*Checks himself.*]

KARL. So it *was* Olga!

DEVIL. Well, yes, it was—I hardly know how to tell you—It was a mad impulse. I proposed, just for fun, without the least idea she would take it up; it means risking her reputation and social position—everything—not to mention the risk of catching cold—

KARL [*startled*]. What do you mean?

DEVIL. Well, this evening—before all her guests—there are a hundred and thirty, I believe—

KARL [*impatient*]. Yes, go on.

DEVIL. Before the élite of Vienna I may say—she will walk through the

ballroom on my arm in—[*Suggestive pause.*—an opera cloak.

KARL [*not quite grasping it*]. An opera cloak?

DEVIL [*suggestively*]. That's all.

KARL. You mean to tell me—she—

DEVIL. She will be here in a moment—and then—before all Vienna—amid the bacchanalian ecstasy—of music, perfume, dancing—I will escort her through the ballroom like a classic goddess—like a modern Mona Vanna—in an opera cloak—

KARL. You liar!

DEVIL [*apparently frightened*]. But, Karl—

KARL. It's a lie. It's a damnable lie.

DEVIL. You tried to catch me—and I have caught you. You love this woman.

KARL [*left center, very loudly*]. Yes, I love her. I have listened to all your lies—I have seen you as I've seen a hundred like you—steal a good woman's reputation and call it success, social success—and boast about it as you drag her in the mud. You have trapped me, it's true—but you will suffer for it. It is my turn now—and I'll put you out of this house, you blackguard—get out before I kick you out.

DEVIL [*center, backs up onto second step; stands*]. Wait! She is coming now.

[*Points to door down right.*]

KARL. Get out, I said.

[*The DEVIL goes back slowly up the stairs. KARL is about to follow him up as DEVIL is on third step. OLGA comes on in her opera cloak and comes down stairs to right. The DEVIL goes behind her. KARL*

backs over left. Long silence.

KARL *stares at OLGA and the DEVIL, speechless.*

OLGA. Karl, you have not spoken to me once to-night.

DEVIL [*stands very near to OLGA, cynically*]. The opera cloak—

OLGA. Everybody is gay, the girls dance as if it were their first ball—the young men as if it were their last.

DEVIL. Strange! that amidst all this gayety Karl should be so sad.

OLGA. Sad?

KARL [*with forced gayety*]. Oh, no—never felt happier in my life.

OLGA. I am glad to hear it.

KARL. I feel like—like a boy—of twenty—like a fool.

DEVIL [*coming down to center*]. No! No!

KARL. I am going to take your advice from now on—I'm going to get drunk to-night.

OLGA [*shocked*]. You, Karl? You drunk?

KARL [*left*]. Yes. I am doing things to-day that I never did before. I've never been engaged before.

OLGA [*right*]. And to-night?

KARL. To-night I shall become engaged.

DEVIL. I have already offered him my congratulations—she's a charming girl.

KARL. A splendid girl. Much too good for me—but marrying is something new to me—I want to try it. It is a sensation I have never had.

DEVIL. You don't seem very gay for a bridegroom.

KARL. That's only the last drop of single bitterness—the dregs of bachelorhood—I'll soon get rid of that and then—

OLGA. Bravo, bravo!

KARL. Oh, spare yourself. I'm only thinking of my own pleasure.

OLGA. Karl, I am afraid you have been drinking already.

KARL. You are at liberty to think what you please.

DEVIL. He is in a bad humor to-day. I told you.

KARL [*cannot control himself any longer*]. You will catch cold. Why don't you take off your cloak?

[*Goes center.*]

DEVIL [*very quiet*]. Perhaps madame is feeling cold.

OLGA [*wrapping herself tighter in her cloak*]. Yes, I feel cold.

DEVIL. Any one not knowing you might think you wear this cloak just to show it off.

OLGA. Don't let us speak about the cloak. [*To KARL in a different tone, crossing to him.*] You seemed to get on very well with Elsa.

KARL. Did I?

DEVIL. It was really charming to watch them.

OLGA. I feel very cold.

DEVIL. I thought you would.

KARL. Cold! I find it hot in here.

OLGA [*crosses back right*]. I feel cold.

DEVIL. Perhaps your dress is thin. The way lovely woman flirts with pneumonia—she wears her lung upon her sleeve.

OLGA. Everything sweet in life comes through carelessness.

KARL [*left center, very excited*]. And do you find boldness sweet?

OLGA. What's that to you? Were you ever bold?

KARL [*crosses to center, losing his self-control completely*]. Aren't you afraid of me—you two?

[*OLGA shivers.*]

DEVIL [*right center, coldly*]. I?

Not even of the legitimate husband—much less a moralizing bridegroom.

[HERMAN enters quickly from above stairs, comes down left, stands next to KARL.]

HERMAN [*banteringly*]. Ah, Olga! I see you are well taken care of.

DEVIL [*bowing*]. It is a privilege.

HERMAN [*taking KARL aside*]. Well, how are you and Elsa getting along?

[Goes with KARL toward the back of the stage.]

OLGA [*quickly to the DEVIL*]. What have you said to him about my cloak?

DEVIL. About your cloak? Why should I speak of your cloak?

OLGA. You must have said something about my cloak—I felt it the moment I came in.

DEVIL. What do you mean?

OLGA. The way he seemed to look through me. It was almost as if he imagined—what *did* you say? What did you insinuate?

DEVIL. Just what you are thinking.

OLGA [*her hands dropping, her head falling backwards with closed eyes, shivering*]. Oh! How could you?

DEVIL [*cynically*]. Come now, don't pretend to be shocked. You admitted you felt it the moment you came in. The thought seemed to please you.

OLGA. How dare you speak to me like that! Oh! if I had known.

DEVIL. Then why didn't you take off your cloak? When you saw—you didn't even open it. Why don't you open it now? The idea seems to please you still.

KARL [*reënters, angrily*]. Olga!

OLGA [*a little scream*]. Your arm,

Doctor. [DEVIL gives her his arm. As they are about to go upstairs, KARL comes back from right. OLGA, looking coldly over shoulder at KARL.]

Are you going to stay here?

KARL. Yes; and you, too!

OLGA. What do you mean?

KARL. You stay here.

DEVIL. What's that?

[OLGA tries to go away with the DEVIL into the ballroom, but KARL steps into their way on the stairs.]

KARL. Olga, you shall *not* go into the ballroom! [DEVIL, as if about to leave them alone, is held off by KARL, who steps in front of him now.] You shall not leave—it concerns you, too.

OLGA. Doctor, give me your arm. Doctor!

KARL [*in tone of command*]. Stop! We'll settle this thing now—right here!

OLGA. Are you mad? [DEVIL goes up stairs below KARL.] If I didn't think he was mad—

KARL. Take off that cloak.

OLGA [*firmly*]. No.

KARL. Take off that cloak.

OLGA [*to DEVIL*]. Please, Doctor, protect me.

KARL [*half maddened*]. Then I'll make you!

[KARL rushes down stairs. DEVIL catches him before he reaches the bottom and holds him back.]

OLGA [*standing very erect, to DEVIL*]. Why did you stop him—[DEVIL lets KARL go.]

DEVIL [*at foot of stairs, in a very low voice as if ashamed*]. Really, madame, for all I know—

[Feigns embarrassment.]

OLGA [*to DEVIL*]. Will you please help me off with my cloak?

DEVIL [*starts to help, then crosses to left of her, with gesture of refusal*]. Madame! Ah!

KARL [*comes down to her, center*]. I will.

OLGA [*very loud*]. No.

[*Wraps herself closer in the cloak. DEVIL and KARL stare at each other. The DEVIL shrugs his shoulders. OLGA goes up the stairs.*]

HERMAN [*coming through the door*]. Oh! There you are. My dear! His Excellency is looking for you. He is about to leave.

OLGA [*as if very tired*]. All right. Please help me off with my cloak.

HERMAN. All right, darling.

[*Takes off her cloak and puts it over his arm. OLGA stands in the same gown as she had on at the beginning of the act, with her back to the audience.*]

OLGA [*looking at KARL and DEVIL, and speaking with ironical courtliness, taking HERMAN's arm*]. Gentlemen . . .

[*Exit HERMAN with OLGA. KARL has been standing on one side of the stage as if dreaming, but suddenly runs to the other side of the stage as if to choke the DEVIL who stands there.*]

KARL [*crossing to DEVIL*]. What have you done?

[*DEVIL thrusts revolver into KARL's hand.*]

DEVIL. Look out! It's loaded! [*KARL stands absolutely still, holding revolver. To KARL, insolently.*] If I hadn't given you that pistol you might have slapped my face. Believe me, there's nothing like turning the other cheek—if you turn it quickly enough—your enemy will miss *both* cheeks.

[*KARL turns away angrily, lays revolver on table right. DEVIL goes down and takes revolver from table. KARL stands, absent-minded, when ELSA enters with her cloak ready to leave.*]

ELSA. Karl, I wanted to say good-bye to you.

KARL [*as if the tone of her voice was awakening him*]. Oh! my dear, dear Elsa!

[*About to go toward her to kiss her. The DEVIL comes back and steps between them. MANSERVANT enters from behind stairs and speaks to ELSA.*]

MANSERVANT. Your mother is waiting for you in the hall, Fraulein.

KARL. May I see you to your carriage?

[*Offers ELSA his arm and they go off.*]

DEVIL [*to MANSERVANT*]. Will you accompany Miss Elsa to her carriage? It is slippery outside, she might fall.

[*Exit MANSERVANT, following KARL and ELSA.*]

OLGA [*enters from right, agitated; sits at table left*]. Your scheme was a great success.

DEVIL. What are you going to do?

OLGA [*writes on an envelope*]. I'm going to write to him.

DEVIL [*crosses to her, reads the envelope*]. To Karl—but what will you write?

OLGA. He wanted to settle my account. I will settle his. I will never see him again. Oh! To have thought me capable—of . . . How could he? I despise him!

DEVIL. *Pourquoi*, madame?

OLGA. Because—because—

DEVIL. Because you love him?

OLGA [*frightened*]. What! [*Tries to get her thoughts together.*] After what has happened, I hate him. And I shall tell him so.

DEVIL. I am *very* sorry.

[*Takes pen from her.*]

OLGA. Don't be sorry. I have much to thank you for. You have rendered me a service. I shall feel better when I have sent this letter off.

DEVIL. You'd better make it plain.

OLGA. I shall speak my mind—there shall be no mistake.

DEVIL. That's it; express your real feelings. [*With ironical emphasis.*] Cold. Harsh.

OLGA. Cold? Harsh?

DEVIL. Make an end of it—once for all.

[*Dipping pen.*]

OLGA [*taking pen*]. Once for all.

DEVIL. Now write.

[*OLGA speaks the first sentence as she writes it. At the word "longer" the DEVIL takes it up, finishing the sentence with a different meaning, and dictates rest of letter walking up and down.*]

OLGA [*in hard voice, speaks while writing*]. Sir, your behavior of this evening has shown me that you are no longer—

DEVIL [*continuing*]. — able to keep up the wretched farce of mere friendship. I read your inmost thought to-night and, Karl, the knowledge that you love me has made me unspeakably happy. Dearest—[*OLGA looks up at the DEVIL, who is standing now at her left. He repeats "Dearest" and points to letter. She resumes writing.*—why should we struggle any longer against the re-

sistless tide that is drawing us together? My strength is gone—[*OLGA looks up again. The DEVIL repeats "My strength is gone" by motion of lips, making no sound. She writes.*—without you I am lost in the black waters—save me, Karl. With your strong arms about me—with your lips to mine—I care not where we drift. I am yours, all yours. You are the master of my soul. Do not leave me, Karl; I love you, I cannot live without you. God bless you! [*OLGA's head falls forward on her arm. OLGA, as if awakening.*] What have I written?

DEVIL [*folding letter*]. What was in your heart!

OLGA [*laughs hysterically*]. I have written everything I had meant never to say.

DEVIL [*taking up letter*]. If women wrote time tables, they would tell all the hours that the train didn't start and all the places you mustn't stop at to get to your destination.

[*DEVIL puts the letter into envelope.*]

OLGA [*horrified*]. What are you doing?

DEVIL [*coldly*]. I will deliver the letter. Women sometimes do not write what they want, but they always want what they write.

OLGA. He must not. He *shall* not see it!

[*HERMAN comes down stairs.*]

HERMAN. Good! You're the kind of guest I like—when all the rest have deserted the ship you stay and keep the hostess company.

DEVIL [*crosses to center, putting letter into his pocket*]. Madame has been so entertaining, that I—

HERMAN [*crossing to bell right*].

Well, let's have another cognac before you go—quite *en famille*.

DEVIL. Thank you very much, but I have an important call very early in the morning. Madame—*[Goes to OLGA, kisses her hand. To HERMAN.]*—I have spent a very pleasant evening at your house.

HERMAN *[coming to him center, they shake hands]*. The pleasure is mine.

[DEVIL starts to go. OLGA utters a suppressed cry.]

DEVIL. Madame?

OLGA *[frightened to death, with a forced smile trying to appear undisturbed]*. There was a piece of paper here. Did you perhaps take it by mistake?

[She is almost crying from fright.]

DEVIL *[coming down stairs, taking the letter out of his pocket, and going toward HERMAN as if to give him the letter]*. Do you mean this?

OLGA *[deathly pale]*. No, no. It was not that.

[Laughing bitterly.]

DEVIL *[bowing]*. Madame . . .

[Bows to HERMAN. Goes off up stairs. Bows low to both and goes out.]

HERMAN *[crosses to OLGA]*. Well, I'm glad it's over. You look tired, my dear.

OLGA *[standing by table left]*. I am tired.

HERMAN. You look flushed. But it's very becoming, you never looked prettier. *[OLGA is leaning backwards over the table. He takes her hand.]* My darling wife.

[Goes to kiss her.]

OLGA *[unkindly]*. Please, please don't.

HERMAN *[crosses to center. Looks at his watch]*. It is after four o'clock, Olga.

[Tries to kiss her again.]

OLGA. Please, please don't. I feel so nervous.

HERMAN. Your cheeks are burning.

[Pats her cheeks.]

OLGA *[nervous, impatient]*. Please—

HERMAN. All right, all right, I'm going. *[He goes toward the door on the right.]* Are you going to stay here?

OLGA *[at table left]*. Let me rest a minute.

HERMAN. As you please.

[MANSERVANT comes in above platform and goes up side stairs.]

OLGA *[to servant]*. What do you want?

MANSERVANT. The lights, madame.

OLGA. Turn off the lights.

[The MANSERVANT puts all the lights out. The lamps in the street and the garden are lighted, but the room is dark.]

HERMAN. It would be wiser to sleep, my dear.

[He waits a minute, shrugs his shoulders, then goes out right.]

OLGA *[stands leaning on the table]*. To go to sleep . . . *[The DEVIL can be seen outside in his fur overcoat, crossing through the garden. As he passes a lamp in the garden his shadow reaching up to the ceiling is thrown on the white wall of the room. OLGA is crossing to right. He takes his hat off, at which moment she sees the shadow on the wall. OLGA shrieks.]* No!

[She drops into a chair.]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[SCENE: *Same as Act One. The afternoon of the next day, about three o'clock. When the curtain rises, the DEVIL is seated in a big chair. Bell rings off stage right. HEINRICH enters right.*]

DEVIL [*rising from chair*]. What do you want?

HEINRICH. There is a lady, sir.

DEVIL. What kind of a lady?

HEINRICH. A real lady, sir.

DEVIL. What does she want?

HEINRICH. She wants to see my master. I told her he was not up yet, but she said she would wait.

DEVIL. Do you know who the lady is? Have you seen her before?

HEINRICH. Never.

DEVIL. Ask her to step in here. [HEINRICH *goes off, shows* ELSA *in. DEVIL bows.*] Ah!

ELSA. You seem to be everywhere. What are you doing here? Are you his secretary?

DEVIL. No, merely a good friend. Nothing else. I just happened in. By the way, how do you do?

ELSA. How do you do? [*Crosses to couch, sits.*] I didn't know there was anybody in this room or I would not have come in. But as it is only you, I don't mind.

[ELSA *sits down, intentionally turning her back to the DEVIL.*]

DEVIL. Karl is expecting you, then?

ELSA. Oh, no.

DEVIL. Will you permit me to prepare him for this pleasant surprise?

ELSA. No, thank you. Don't disturb him. I can look around while I'm waiting. I have never been here before.

DEVIL. I know it.

ELSA. Who told you?

DEVIL. The man—a lady might come every day and escape notice—but coming for the first time she would be sure to attract his attention.

ELSA. I feel embarrassed coming here alone.

DEVIL. I know that, too.

ELSA. From the same source?

DEVIL. Yes; he said you were a *real lady*.

ELSA. He is the only one here who has spoken to me like a gentleman.

DEVIL. He must have thought you were a model.

ELSA [*rises; angrily*]. How dare you?

DEVIL. A servant can only speak like a gentleman to—his equals.

ELSA [*sits down again; sarcastically*]. Then I was mistaken—it is not Heinrich who is the servant.

DEVIL. Who knows—perhaps he is a clergyman.

ELSA. I don't understand you.

DEVIL. Only two people in the world may open the door of a bachelor's apartment to a young lady—the manservant, or a clergyman with a marriage certificate—you can take your choice.

ELSA. Let me tell you I was once left alone with a gentleman who tried to kiss me, and I slapped his face.

DEVIL. Indeed? I was once left alone with a lady who tried to slap me and I *kissed* her face.

[Enter HEINRICH.]

ELSA [*controlling herself with difficulty*]. Oh!

DEVIL. Heinrich! There's a little

leather satchel in the pocket of my overcoat.

[HEINRICH *goes out.*]

ELSA. Don't be afraid. This is not my day for crying.

DEVIL. It's when a girl laughs that I'm most afraid. [HEINRICH *brings the satchel, puts it on the table left center, and goes into studio.*] Why did you come here?

ELSA. I intend to sit for my portrait—to do that, I must come every day.

DEVIL. You intend to come here every day, and to do that you must have your portrait painted.

ELSA. You are clever at twisting words.

DEVIL. Perhaps you know there is another lady coming every day to have her portrait painted?

ELSA. Yes, I know. That's why I want mine painted—we'll see which will be the better likeness.

DEVIL. Come now—you must let me sit down—this time I want you to be right. [*Raises her and swings her in front of him. DEVIL sits on couch, ELSA leans on table.*] Are you aware—

ELSA. This is awful—you question me like a judge.

DEVIL. It is you who answer like a prisoner. Do you know that Karl is in love with Olga?

ELSA [*bitterly*]. Do I know it!

DEVIL. And you still mean to fight?

ELSA. Yes, I mean to fight—you gave me good advice.

DEVIL. That was yesterday.

ELSA. Well—this is to-day.

DEVIL [*impressively*]. Yesterday was your winning day. Yesterday it was written that you, Elsa, would

succeed in whatever thing you made up your mind to do, with the whole strength of your will.

ELSA. Last night I made up my mind to—

DEVIL [*interrupting gravely*]. To dance every dance. [*Pause.*] You danced every dance.

ELSA [*defiantly*]. Karl asked me to marry him last night.

DEVIL. —and you refused.

ELSA. Yes—but to-day I shall—

DEVIL. To-day is not your winning day—yesterday you chose—to-day you will have no choice.

ELSA. I won't give him up—I can't—I don't know how.

DEVIL. You will have to learn—let me see—I think I know some one who has learned the lesson and can teach it to you—[*Goes to hall door, which he opens.*] Why, Mimi! Why do you wait out there? Come in here where it's warm!

[*MIMI comes in—DEVIL seats MIMI center. He regards them both with a satanic smile—begins to hum a tune and exits left, singing as he gets out; he laughs—his laugh dies away outside.*]

MIMI [*sitting on small chair center. After a silence*]. Are you waiting for the painter, too, madame?

ELSA [*seated on couch*]. Yes.

MIMI. Yes. [*Pause.*] He must have been on a spree last night. [*Smiling.*] When he goes on a spree he always sleeps late.

ELSA [*somewhat embarrassed*]. Yes?

MIMI [*making conversation*]. Yes. If you haven't slept for a long time, then—you must sleep a long time.

ELSA. Yes?

MIMI. Yes, madame—[*Silence.*]—Is madame going to have her portrait painted?

ELSA. Yes.

MIMI. Yes, madame—I know all the ladies that come here—[*Quick look from ELSA.*]—I'm quite at home here—I'm his model. [*Explaining.*] I don't pay for my portraits. [*Regarding ELSA.*] You have a splendid profile, madame.

ELSA. You always say "madame"—I am not married. My name is—

MIMI [*interrupting*]. I know your name. I've heard it often. You belong to a very rich family. I know what that means, I used to be well off, too. I wasn't always obliged to work for a living.

ELSA. No?

MIMI. I was a chorus girl, but I had bad luck.

ELSA. I am so sorry for you.

MIMI [*silence*]. I know all about you and Herr Karl.

[*Rises, goes center.*]

ELSA. From whom?

MIMI [*importantly*]. I know everything that goes on in this house. I told you I was his model—I sew on buttons and count the laundry.

ELSA. Does the laundry-woman steal?

MIMI. No. But she uses strong blueing—I know everything Herr Karl thinks of.

[*Pointing at ELSA.*]

ELSA [*as if she were getting interested*]. And does that interest you?

MIMI. Yes, indeed it does. But that's all over now.

ELSA. Why so?

MIMI. Because he is going to get married.

ELSA. But he will paint just the same—he will want models.

MIMI. Yes, but—[*Ingenuously.*]—you know, when one has sewn on buttons—and counted the laundry—then to be—just a plain model—that hurts.

ELSA. And you like Herr Karl?

MIMI [*repressing her feelings*]. Yes—I—I like him—he's such a dear boy.

ELSA. Does he paint you now?

MIMI [*coming to head of couch; sadly*]. No. He only paints landscapes and—bank presidents.

ELSA. Then you did not come to pose to-day?

MIMI. A model always comes to pose. It's tiring work, too, I can tell you—and if the artist wants to make love—it isn't her fault—and—[*Sighs.*]—oh, it's *such* a rest.

ELSA. Oh, please.

[*Draws herself up stiffly, offended.*]

MIMI. Now I've offended you—I ought to have known better—my people are all refined—I wasn't born a model.

ELSA. I'm sorry I showed it—but—I—I'm nervous to-day.

MIMI [*brightening*]. Oh, I know what it is—I used to suffer dreadfully from nervousness when I was in the chorus.

ELSA. Come over here, Mimi; I want to talk to you.

MIMI [*goes over and sits on the couch*]. You can talk to me about everything, I'm not a bad sort, really I'm not. I've known all along about Herr Karl and—and you—He's such a kind man. I was crying when I went away yesterday, and he felt sorry for me and he came to see me on his way to the ball—in his eve-

ning clothes—but I didn't receive him. If it's over, it may as well be over.

ELSA. Was he fond of you?

MIMI. I loved him, but what's the use? It's like the railway—the station is there and the train comes and then the train goes away, and the station cannot run after it; if the station is small, the train only stops a minute, and—[*Sighs.*—one must wait until another train comes.

ELSA. You loved him and can speak like that?

MIMI. Yes, I loved him, but it's all over now. I was foolish to come here again when I'd made up my mind I wouldn't, but now I'm sensible again; I'll go away and try to forget him, I hope he will be—hap—happy!

[*Begins to cry, looks for handkerchief in muff, but can't find it. ELSA takes handkerchief out of "weeping satchel," and gives it to her.*]

ELSA. Poor Mimi! Poor Mimi!

MIMI [*wiping her eyes with handkerchief, then returning it to ELSA*]. I—hope—you will be—hap—happy—too!

ELSA. I—happy?

MIMI. You are going to marry Karl—

ELSA. No—no, I'm not.

MIMI. But it's you he's in love with—

ELSA. No, Mimi; I'm not the one—it's some one else.

MIMI. You don't mean Mrs. Zanden—it can't be—why, she's your friend.

ELSA. She was.

MIMI. I don't believe it—it's not love—it's a madness—a—

ELSA [*jumping at the idea*]. An infatuation?

MIMI. Yes, that's it—he's not in love with her—he's not himself.

ELSA. You think so?

MIMI. Yesterday he acted as if he were under some strange—[*Rises. MIMI looks nervously behind her on both sides, ELSA following her example.*—under some strange—

ELSA. Influence?

MIMI. Yes.

[*The two girls look at each other in silence—for what seems like a minute.*]

ELSA. Mimi, who is that man?

MIMI [*looks behind her again nervously*]. I don't know—I hate him.

ELSA [*after looking behind her*]. So do I.

[*They grasp each other's hands across the table. A pause.*]

MIMI [*holding ELSA's hand*]. I'm glad I came. I feel better already for having seen you. I'm going to be sensible now. I'm going away—and I'm never coming back! [*In altered voice.*] What time is it?

ELSA. It's almost three o'clock.

MIMI. Three o'clock! Then I must hurry. I have an appointment at half past—he's an illustrator—such a talented boy; he's just had a picture accepted by the "*Fliegende Blätter*."

ELSA. And you are posing for him?

MIMI. Oh, yes; but to-night he goes to the artists' dinner, and I have to find his dress studs, and iron a tie for him, and trim his cuffs. [*Makes gesture of cutting with scissors outside the edge of her cuff.*] Good-bye.

[*Goes out quickly.*]

ELSA [*looks after MIMI, then around the room, suddenly begins to*

sob, and calls in frightened voice]. Mimi! Mimi!

[*Runs off. DEVIL enters just as ELSA leaves. DEVIL rings bell on table.*]

HEINRICH [*entering*]. Did you ring, sir?

DEVIL. Where is my tea? Have you any rum in the house?

HEINRICH. Yes, sir.

DEVIL. I'll have some with my tea. Is your master getting up?

HEINRICH. Yes, sir.

DEVIL. Has any one called to see him this morning?

HEINRICH. Mrs. Zanden's maid has been here three times.

DEVIL. What did she want?

HEINRICH. She inquired whether Mrs. Zanden could see my master. I told her I had strict orders not to call him before three.

DEVIL. Hurry with the tea. [*Door bell rings.*] I'll have it in here.

[*DEVIL goes into studio. HEINRICH goes out to hall, door slams, OLGA speaking outside.*]

OLGA. Is your master at home?

HEINRICH. Yes, madame.

OLGA [*entering*]. My maid told me I could not see him until three—it is three o'clock now.

HEINRICH. I am very sorry, madame, but you will have to wait a few minutes longer. I will tell him that you are here.

OLGA. Thank you. [*HEINRICH crosses to studio door.*] Wait! Has any one called to see your master this morning?

HEINRICH. No, madame.

OLGA. Didn't any one leave a letter for him?

HEINRICH. No, madame.

OLGA [*aside*]. Thank God! Please tell him I'm here.

HEINRICH. I'm afraid, madame, you will have to wait a moment; but I will tell the Doctor—

OLGA [*quickly*]. What doctor?

HEINRICH. The gentleman who was here with you yesterday.

OLGA [*aside*]. Dr. Miller? He—is—in—there?

HEINRICH. Yes, madame.

OLGA [*aside*]. Then I'm too late. [*To HEINRICH, reluctantly.*] Did you see Dr. Miller give a letter to your master? A piece of paper?

HEINRICH. Possibly, madame, but I don't remember.

OLGA. Tell Dr. Miller to come at once. Say a lady wishes to speak to him, but don't give him my name.

[*HEINRICH goes out. OLGA walks up and down terribly agitated.*]

DEVIL enters.]

DEVIL. Are you the lady who wishes to see me at once?

OLGA. Oh, tell me—did you—have you . . . ?

DEVIL [*nods*]. Yes—delivered. [*OLGA sinks into chair, clasping her hands tightly. Enter HEINRICH, busy with tea things.*] Put it here. Thank you.

OLGA [*without looking at the DEVIL*]. Did he read it?

DEVIL. Yes.

[*Is busy with his tea. Silence.*]

OLGA. My God!

DEVIL [*now standing behind OLGA, tea cup in his hand*]. After he read it, he buried his face in the pillow and cried.

OLGA. He cried?

DEVIL. I hate men who cry.

OLGA. I did not want him to have that letter. I wanted to speak to him first. I wanted to ask him to give me my letter back unopened. I am too late.

DEVIL. You were not too late. It's I that was too early.

OLGA. He cried?

DEVIL. From joy.

OLGA. I haven't the courage to speak to him, and yet I feel that I must. I would like to go away, but something holds me; something I cannot—I cannot— Oh, what will become of me?

HEINRICH [*at door*]. My master will be here in a moment, sir.

[HEINRICH *goes out*.]

DEVIL. I must be going.

OLGA. Don't go! Please stay. I don't want to be alone with him.

DEVIL. But if I am here you cannot speak to him about the letter. I shall only be in the way.

OLGA [*very weak*]. Very well, then, I shall speak to him quite frankly. I shall ask him for the last time—

KARL [*voice from the studio*]. Heinrich!

DEVIL [*quickly*]. There he is.

OLGA [*very weak*]. Please stay.

DEVIL [*pointing to the small door at left*]. I shall be here. If you need me, call.

[DEVIL *goes out*. KARL *comes in from the studio*.]

KARL [*kisses OLGA's hand passionately*]. Olga! I ought to go on my knees and beg your pardon for what I did last night.

OLGA. Speak low—Dr. Miller is in there.

KARL. Olga—can you ever—

OLGA. No, no; it is I who should ask forgiveness. I was to blame. I lost control of myself. After what happened, I wanted to know—I wanted to make sure—but, you understand now, my letter has told you everything.

KARL. What letter?

OLGA [*reproachfully*]. Karl, I understand. You want to spare me—you're being discreet; but you don't know me. I mean every word of that letter, I'm glad I wrote it—

KARL. But I didn't get any letter.

OLGA. Didn't Dr. Miller give you a letter?

KARL. No, no, really—[*Angry and almost crying, crossing to door*.] Dr. Miller. [DEVIL *enters*.] My—my letter.

DEVIL. Ah, pardon me, madame, a thousand pardons, I quite forgot. The only excuse I can offer is that there are some letters which ought never to be delivered.

[*Takes letter out of his pocket*.]

OLGA [*takes a step toward KARL, looks at DEVIL over her shoulder, shivers slightly*]. Who is that man? [*Silence*. KARL *looks at DEVIL*. OLGA *is terrified*. DEVIL *crosses, gives the letter to KARL with a smile*. OLGA, *quickly, to KARL*.] Tear that letter up. [KARL *tears up letter*.] Put it in the fire.

[KARL *crumples up the pieces and throws them into the fire*. As he does so, OLGA *makes an involuntary movement with her hand as if to stop him, but he does not see it as his back is turned*. The DEVIL *sees it, however, and smiles*.]

DEVIL. I sincerely regret it if my forgetfulness has caused any inconvenience.

KARL [*at alcove, pointing to door right. Offensively*]. Pray don't let me detain you—

DEVIL. My train doesn't leave for an hour. Once more a thousand pardons. [*Crossing to center, turning to both*.] If I could have foreseen what

terrible distress the non-delivery of this letter—

KARL [*firmly*]. You may be quite sure it contained nothing—er—nothing—

[*At a loss for a word.*]

DEVIL [*looking at OLGA*]. Nothing.

KARL [*at large chair*]. You will miss your train.

DEVIL [*to OLGA, bowing*]. Madame— [*To KARL, offering hand. KARL turns his back.*] Good-bye; a thousand pardons.

[*Exit DEVIL at door to hall.*]

OLGA. I would have given anything in the world if you had not burned that letter.

KARL. Why—you told me— [*OLGA shrugs her shoulders as if to say, "What can one expect of a man?"*] What does it matter anyway, whatever it is? I would rather hear it from your lips.

OLGA [*firmly*]. No! The letter is burned; it is nothing but ashes—it is dead—no human power can bring it back to life.

KARL. But, Olga!

OLGA. A moment ago I would have given all I possessed to save it from the fire—and now—

KARL. What has happened?

OLGA. I can't tell you. I only know I am glad—I'm glad.

[*OLGA here seems to have suddenly become composed, almost happy, as if something had been settled, though not as she had wished; still it is a relief.*]

KARL [*takes her hand*]. Olga, do you mean you will never—

OLGA [*smiling*]. I mean you will never know what was in that letter—it is as if it had never been written—it has ceased to exist, and we are past the day of miracles.

KARL [*impatiently*]. Miracles?

OLGA. No, no! Only the devil himself would re-create that letter from its burnt ashes. Good-bye, Karl. I'm going now—I shan't see you again.

[*Shakes hands naturally. At word "Devil," the DEVIL enters silently from hall door. He has his fur coat on. He smiles wickedly, and at OLGA's words "re-create that letter," pulls OLGA's letter out of his pocket, and stands so that the chair hides him from KARL and OLGA, who are close to studio door.*]

KARL. Olga, you are afraid of something. What is it?

OLGA. I'm afraid of—myself—good-bye!

KARL. Good-bye, Olga. [*They turn and see the DEVIL. To DEVIL, angrily.*] I thought you'd gone! [*Goes abruptly into the studio.*]

[*OLGA stands as if hypnotized.*]

DEVIL [*to OLGA*]. I beg your pardon, I am so upset to-day— [*Holding out letter.*] I made a mistake—I gave you my tailor's bill instead of your letter—here is your letter!

[*DEVIL gives the letter to OLGA, who snatches it from him in a frightened manner and tears it open. She recognizes her letter.*]

OLGA. Karl! My letter! I have my letter—

[*She runs into the studio. The DEVIL goes to the door of the studio, smiles diabolically, listens a minute at the door and rubs his hands as if he were very pleased with himself.*]

DEVIL. Voilà!

CURTAIN

L I L I O M

English text by

BENJAMIN F. GLAZER

First produced in America by

The Theatre Guild

April 20, 1921

CHARACTERS

LILIOM⁺
JULIE^{*}
MARIE⁺
MRS. MUSKAT⁺
LOUISE
MRS. HOLLUNDER
FICSUR
YOUNG HOLLUNDER
WOLF BEIFELD
THE CARPENTER
LINZMAN
THE DOCTOR
THE MAGISTRATE
TWO MOUNTED POLICEMEN
TWO PLAINCLOTHES POLICEMEN
TWO HEAVENLY POLICEMEN
THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN
THE POORLY DRESSED MAN
THE GUARD
A SUBURBAN POLICEMAN

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

PROLOGUE. *An amusement park on the outskirts of Budapest.*
FIRST SCENE. *A lonely place in the park.*
SECOND SCENE. *The photographic studio of the HOLLUNDERS.*
THIRD SCENE. *Same as Scene Two.*
FOURTH SCENE. *A railroad embankment outside the city.*
FIFTH SCENE. *Same as Scene Two.*
SIXTH SCENE. *A courtroom in the beyond.*
SEVENTH SCENE. *JULIE's garden.*

There are intermissions only after the second and fifth scenes.

THE PROLOGUE

[*An amusement park on the outskirts of Budapest on a late afternoon in Spring. Barkers stand before the booths of the sideshows haranguing the passing crowd. The strident music of a calliope is heard; laughter, shouts, the scuffle of feet, the signal bells of a merry-go-round.*

The merry-go-round is at center. LILIOM stands at the entrance, a cigarette in his mouth, coaxing the people in. The girls regard him with idolizing glances and screech with pleasure as he playfully pushes them through entrance. Now and then some girl's escort resents the familiarity, whereupon LILIOM's demeanor becomes ugly and menacing, and the cowed escort slinks through the entrance behind his girl or contents himself with a muttered resentful comment.

One girl hands LILIOM a red carnation; he rewards her with a bow and a smile. When the soldier who accompanies her protests, LILIOM cows him with a fierce glance and a threatening gesture. MARIE and JULIE come out of the crowd and LILIOM favors them with particular notice as they pass into the merry-go-round.

MRS. MUSKAT comes out of the merry-go-round, bringing LILIOM coffee and rolls. LILIOM mounts the barker's stand at the entrance, where he is elevated over every one on the stage. Here he begins his harangue. Everybody turns toward him. The other booths are gradually deserted. The tumult makes it impossible for the audience to hear what he is saying, but every now and then some witticism of his provokes a storm of laughter which is audible above the din. Many people enter the merry-go-round. Here and there one catches a phrase "Room for one more on the zebra's back," "Which of you ladies?" "Ten heller for adults, five for children," "Step right up"—

It is growing darker. A lamplighter crosses the stage, and begins unperceptibly lighting the colored gas-lamps. The whistle of a distant locomotive is heard. Suddenly the tumult ceases, the lights go out, and the curtain falls in darkness.]

END OF PROLOGUE

SCENE ONE

[SCENE: *A lonely place in the park, half hidden by trees and shrubbery. Under a flowering acacia tree stands a painted wooden bench. From the distance, faintly, comes the tumult of the amusement park. It is the sunset of the same day.*

When the curtain rises the stage is empty.

MARIE enters quickly, pauses at center, and looks back.]

MARIE. Julie, Julie! [*There is no answer.*] Do you hear me, Julie? Let her be! Come on. Let her be.

[*Starts to go back. JULIE enters, looks back angrily.*]

JULIE. Did you ever hear of such a thing? What's the matter with the woman anyway?

MARIE [*looking back again*]. Here she comes again.

JULIE. Let her come. I didn't do

anything to her. All of a sudden she comes up to me and begins to raise a row.

MARIE. Here she is. Come on, let's run.

[*Tries to urge her off.*]

JULIE. Run? I should say not. What would I want to run for? I'm not afraid of her.

MARIE. Oh, come on. She'll only start a fight.

JULIE. I'm going to stay right here. Let her *start* a fight.

MRS. MUSKAT [*entering*]. What do you want to run away for? [*To JULIE.*] Don't worry. I won't eat you. But there's one thing I want to tell you, my dear. Don't let me catch you in my carousel again. I stand for a whole lot; I have to in my business. It makes no difference to me whether my customers are ladies or the likes of you—as long as they pay their money. But when a girl misbehaves herself on my carousel—out she goes. Do you understand?

JULIE. Are you talking to me?

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes, you! You—chambermaid, you! In my carousel—

JULIE. Who did anything in your old carousel? I paid my fare and took my seat and never said a word, except to my friend here.

MARIE. No, she never opened her mouth. Liliom came over to her of his own accord.

MRS. MUSKAT. It's all the same. I'm not going to get in trouble with the police, and lose my license on account of you—you shabby kitchen-maid!

JULIE. Shabby yourself.

MRS. MUSKAT. You stay out of my carousel! Letting my barker fool with you! Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

JULIE. What? What did you say?

MRS. MUSKAT. I suppose you think I have no eyes in my head. I see everything that goes on in my carousel. During the whole ride she let Liliom fool with her—the shameless hussy!

JULIE. He did not fool with me! I don't let any man fool with me!

MRS. MUSKAT. He leaned against you all through the ride!

JULIE. He leaned against the panther. He always leans against something, doesn't he? Everybody leans where he wants. I couldn't tell him not to lean, if he always leans, could I? But he didn't lay a hand on me.

MRS. MUSKAT. Oh, didn't he? And I suppose he didn't put his arm around your waist, either?

MARIE. And if he did? What of it?

MRS. MUSKAT. You hold your tongue! No one's asking you—just you keep out of it.

JULIE. He put his arm around my waist—just the same as he does to all the girls. He always does that.

MRS. MUSKAT. I'll teach him not to do it any more, my dear. No carryings on in my carousel! If you are looking for that sort of thing, you'd better go to the circus! You'll find lots of soldiers there to carry on with!

JULIE. You keep your soldiers for yourself!

MARIE. Soldiers! As if we wanted soldiers!

MRS. MUSKAT. Well, I only want to tell you this, my dear, so that we understand each other perfectly. If you ever stick your nose in my carousel again, you'll wish you hadn't! I'm not going to lose my license on account of the likes of you!

People who don't know how to be-
have, have got to stay out!

JULIE. You're wasting your breath.
If I feel like riding on your carousel
I'll pay my ten heller and I'll ride.
I'd like to see any one try to stop
me!

MRS. MUSKAT. Just come and try
it, my dear—just come and try it.

MARIE. We'll see what'll happen.

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes, you will see
something happen that never hap-
pened before in this park.

JULIE. Perhaps you think you
could throw me out!

MRS. MUSKAT. I'm sure of it, my
dear.

JULIE. And suppose I'm stronger
than you?

MRS. MUSKAT. I'd think twice be-
fore I'd dirty my hands on a common
servant girl. I'll have Liliom throw
you out. He knows how to handle
your kind.

JULIE. You think Liliom would
throw me out?

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes, my dear, so
fast that you won't know what hap-
pened to you!

JULIE. He'd throw me—

[*Stops suddenly, for MRS. MUS-
KAT has turned away. Both
look off stage until LILIOM
enters, surrounded by four gig-
gling servant girls.*]

LILIOM. Go away! Stop following
me, or I'll smack your face!

A LITTLE SERVANT GIRL. Well,
give me back my handkerchief.

LILIOM. Go on now—

THE FOUR SERVANT GIRLS [*simul-
taneously*]. What do you think of
him?—My handkerchief!—Give it
back to her!—That's a nice thing to
do!

THE LITTLE SERVANT GIRL [*to Mrs.*

MUSKAT]. Please, lady, make him—

MRS. MUSKAT. Oh, shut up!

LILIOM. Will you get out of here?

[*Makes a threatening gesture—
the four servant girls exit in
voluble but fearful haste.*]

MRS. MUSKAT. What have you
been doing now?

LILIOM. None of your business.
[*Glances at JULIE.*] Have you been
starting with her again?

JULIE. Mister Liliom, please—

LILIOM [*steps threateningly toward
her*]. Don't yell!

JULIE [*timidly*]. I didn't yell.

LILIOM. Well, don't. [*To Mrs.
MUSKAT.*] What's the matter? What
has she done to you?

MRS. MUSKAT. What has she
done? She's been impudent to me.
Just as impudent as she could be! I
put her out of the carousel. Take a
good look at this innocent thing,
Liliom. She's never to be allowed in
my carousel again!

LILIOM [*to JULIE*]. You heard
that. Run home, now.

MARIE. Come on. Don't waste
your time with such people.

[*Tries to lead JULIE away.*]

JULIE. No, I won't—

MRS. MUSKAT. If she ever comes
again, you're not to let her in. And
if she gets in before you see her,
throw her out. Understand?

LILIOM. What has she done, any-
how?

JULIE [*agitated and very earnest*].
Mister Liliom—tell me, please—hon-
est and truly—if I come into the
carousel, will you throw me out?

MRS. MUSKAT. Of course he'll
throw you out.

MARIE. She wasn't talking to you.

JULIE. Tell me straight to my face,

Mister Liliom, would you throw me out?

[*They face each other. There is a brief pause.*]

LILIOM. Yes, little girl, if there was a reason—but if there was no reason, why should I throw you out?

MARIE [*to* MRS. MUSKAT]. There, you see!

JULIE. Thank you, Mister Liliom.

MRS. MUSKAT. And I tell you again, if this little slut dares to set her foot in my carousel, she's to be thrown out! I'll stand for no indecency in my establishment.

LILIOM. What do you mean—indecency?

MRS. MUSKAT. I saw it all. There's no use denying it.

JULIE. She says you put your arm around my waist.

LILIOM. Me?

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes, you! I saw you. Don't play the innocent.

LILIOM. Here's something new! I'm not to put my arm around a girl's waist any more! I suppose I'm to ask your permission before I touch another girl!

MRS. MUSKAT. You can touch as many girls as you want and as often as you want—for my part you can go as far as you like with any of them—but not this one—I permit no indecency in my carousel.

[*There is a long pause.*]

LILIOM [*to* MRS. MUSKAT]. And now I'll ask you please to shut your mouth.

MRS. MUSKAT. What?

LILIOM. Shut your mouth quick, and go back to your carousel.

MRS. MUSKAT. What?

LILIOM. What did she do to you, anyhow? Tryin' to start a fight with a little pigeon like that . . . just be-

cause I touched her?—You come to the carousel as often as you want to, little girl. Come every afternoon, and sit on the panther's back, and if you haven't got the price, Liliom will pay for you. And if any one dares to bother you, you come and tell *me*.

MRS. MUSKAT. You reprobate!

LILIOM. Old witch!

JULIE. Thank you, Mister Liliom.

MRS. MUSKAT. You seem to think that I can't throw you out, too. What's the reason I can't? Because you are the best barker in the park? Well, you are very much mistaken. In fact, you can consider yourself thrown out already. You're discharged!

LILIOM. Very good.

MRS. MUSKAT [*weakening a little*]. I can discharge you any time I feel like it.

LILIOM. Very good, you feel like discharging me. I'm discharged. That settles it.

MRS. MUSKAT. Playing the high and mighty, are you? Conceited pig! Good-for-nothing!

LILIOM. You said you'd throw me out, didn't you? Well, that suits me; I'm thrown out.

MRS. MUSKAT [*softening*]. Do you have to take up every word I say?

LILIOM. It's all right; it's all settled. I'm a good-for-nothing. And a conceited pig. And I'm discharged.

MRS. MUSKAT. Do you want to ruin my business?

LILIOM. A good-for-nothing? Now I know! And I'm discharged! Very good.

MRS. MUSKAT. You're a devil, you are . . . and that woman—

LILIOM. Keep away from her!

MRS. MUSKAT. I'll get Hollinger to give you such a beating that you'll

hear all the angels sing . . . and it won't be the first time, either.

LILIOM. Get out of here. I'm discharged. And you get out of here.

JULIE [*timidly*]. Mister Liliom, if she's willing to say that she hasn't discharged you—

LILIOM. You keep out of this.

JULIE [*timidly*]. I don't want this to happen on account of me.

LILIOM [*to Mrs. MUSKAT, pointing to JULIE*]. Apologize to her!

MARIE. A-ha!

MRS. MUSKAT. Apologize? To who?

LILIOM. To this little pigeon. Well—are you going to do it?

MRS. MUSKAT. If you give me this whole park on a silver plate, and all the gold of the Rothschilds on top of it—I'd—I'd— Let her dare to come into my carousel again and she'll get thrown out so hard that she'll see stars in daylight!

LILIOM. In that case, dear lady [*Takes off his cap with a flourish.*] you are respectfully requested to get out o' here as fast as your legs will carry you—I never beat up a woman yet—except that Holzer woman who I sent to the hospital for three weeks—but—if you don't get out o' here this minute, and let this little squab be, I'll give you the prettiest slap in the jaw you ever had in your life.

MRS. MUSKAT. Very good, my son. Now you *can* go to the devil. Good-bye. You're discharged, and you needn't try to come back, either.

[*She exits. It is beginning to grow dark.*]

MARIE [*with grave concern*]. Mister Liliom—

LILIOM. Don't you pity me or I'll give you a slap in the jaw. [*To*

JULIE.] And don't you pity me, either.

JULIE [*in alarm*]. I don't pity you, Mister Liliom.

LILIOM. You're a liar, you *are* pitying me. I can see it in your face. You're thinking, now that Madame Muskat has thrown him out, Liliom will have to go begging. Huh! Look at me. I'm big enough to get along without a Madame Muskat. I have been thrown out of better jobs than hers.

JULIE. What will you do now, Mister Liliom?

LILIOM. Now? First of all, I'll go and get myself—a glass of beer. You see, when something happens to annoy me, I always drink a glass of beer.

JULIE. Then you are annoyed about losing your job.

LILIOM. No, only about where I'm going to get the beer.

MARIE. Well—ch—

LILIOM. Well—ch—what?

MARIE. Well—ch—are you going to stay with us, Mister Liliom?

LILIOM. Will you pay for the beer? [*MARIE looks doubtful; he turns to JULIE.*] Will you? [*She does not answer.*] How much money have you got?

JULIE [*bashfully*]. Eight heller.

LILIOM. And you? [*MARIE casts down her eyes and does not reply. LILIOM continues sternly.*] I asked you how much you've got. [*MARIE begins to weep softly.*] I understand. Well, you needn't cry about it. You girls stay here, while I go back to the carousel and get my clothes and things. And when I come back, we'll go to the Hungarian beer-garden. It's all right, I'll pay. Keep your money. [*He exits. MARIE and JULIE*

stand silent, watching him until he has gone.]

MARIE. Are you sorry for him?

JULIE. Are you?

MARIE. Yes, a little. Why are you looking after him in that funny way?

JULIE [*sits down*]. Nothing—except I'm sorry he lost his job.

MARIE [*with a touch of pride*]. It was on our account he lost his job. Because he's fallen in love with you.

JULIE. He hasn't at all.

MARIE [*confidently*]. Oh, yes! he is in love with you. [*Hesitantly, romantically.*] There is some one in love with me, too.

JULIE. There is? Who?

MARIE. I—I never mentioned it before, because you hadn't a lover of your own—but now you have—and I'm free to speak. [*Very grandiloquently.*] My heart has found its mate.

JULIE. You're only making it up.

MARIE. No, it's true—my heart's true love—

JULIE. Who? Who is he?

MARIE. A soldier.

JULIE. What kind of a soldier?

MARIE. I don't know. Just a soldier. Are there different kinds?

JULIE. Many different kinds. There are hussars, artillerymen, engineers, infantry—that's the kind that walks—and—

MARIE. How can you tell which is which?

JULIE. By their uniforms.

MARIE [*after trying to puzzle it out*]. The conductors on the street cars—are they soldiers?

JULIE. Certainly not. They're conductors.

MARIE. Well, they have uniforms.

JULIE. But they don't carry swords or guns.

MARIE. Oh! [*Thinks it over again; then.*] Well, policemen—are they?

JULIE [*with a touch of exasperation*]. Are they what?

MARIE. Soldiers.

JULIE. Certainly not. They're just policemen.

MARIE [*triumphantly*]. But they have uniforms—and they carry weapons, too.

JULIE. You're just as dumb as you can be. You don't go by their uniforms.

MARIE. But you said—

JULIE. No, I didn't. A letter-carrier wears a uniform, too, but that doesn't make him a soldier.

MARIE. But if he carried a gun or a sword, would he be—

JULIE. No, he'd still be a letter-carrier. You can't go by guns or swords, either.

MARIE. Well, if you don't go by the uniforms or the weapons, what do you go by?

JULIE. By— [*Tries to put it into words; fails; then breaks off suddenly.*] Oh, you'll get to know when you've lived in the city long enough. You're nothing but a country girl. When you've lived in the city a year, like I have, you'll know all about it.

MARIE [*half angrily*]. Well, how do you know when you see a real soldier?

JULIE. By one thing.

MARIE. What?

JULIE. One thing— [*She pauses. MARIE starts to cry.*] Oh, what are you crying about?

MARIE. Because you're making fun of me. . . . You're a city girl, and I'm just fresh from the country . . . and how am I expected to know a soldier when I see one? . . . You,

you ought to tell me, instead of making fun of me—

JULIE. All right. Listen then, cry-baby. There's only one way to tell a soldier: by his salute! That's the only way.

MARIE [*joyfully; with a sigh of relief*]. Ah—that's good.

JULIE. What?

MARIE. I say—it's all right then—because Wolf—Wolf— [JULIE *laughs derisively*.] Wolf—that's his name.

[*She weeps again.*]

JULIE. Crying again? What now?

MARIE. You're making fun of me again.

JULIE. I'm not. But when you say, "Wolf, Wolf—" like that, I have to laugh, don't I? [*Archly.*] What's his name again?

MARIE. I won't tell you.

JULIE. All right. If you won't say it, then he's no soldier.

MARIE. I'll say it.

JULIE. Go on.

MARIE. No, I won't.

[*She weeps again.*]

JULIE. Then he's not a soldier. I guess he's a letter-carrier—

MARIE. No—no—I'd rather say it.

JULIE. Well, then.

MARIE [*giggling*]. But you mustn't look at me. You look the other way, and I'll say it. [JULIE *looks away*.] MARIE *can hardly restrain her own laughter.*] Wolf! [*She laughs.*] That's his real name. Wolf, Wolf, Soldier—Wolf!

JULIE. What kind of a uniform does he wear?

MARIE. Red.

JULIE. Red trousers?

MARIE. No.

JULIE. Red coat?

MARIE. No.

JULIE. What then?

MARIE [*triumphantly*]. His cap!

JULIE [*after a long pause*]. He's just a porter, you dunce. Red cap . . . that's a porter—and he doesn't carry a gun or a sword, either.

MARIE [*triumphantly*]. But he salutes. You said yourself that was the only way to tell a soldier—

JULIE. He doesn't salute at all. He only greets people—

MARIE. He salutes me. . . . And if his name *is* Wolf, that doesn't prove he ain't a soldier—he salutes, and he wears a red cap and he stands on guard all day long outside a big building—

JULIE. What does he do there?

MARIE [*seriously*]. He spits.

JULIE [*with contempt*]. He's nothing—nothing but a common porter.

MARIE. What's Liliom?

JULIE [*indignantly*]. Why speak of him? What has he to do with me?

MARIE. The same as Wolf has to do with me. If you can talk to me like that about Wolf, I can talk to you about Liliom.

JULIE. He's nothing to me. He put his arm around me in the carousel. I couldn't tell him not to put his arm around me after he had done it, could I?

MARIE. I suppose you didn't like him to do it?

JULIE. No.

MARIE. Then why are you waiting for him? Why don't you go home?

JULIE. Why—eh—he *said* we were to wait for him.

[LILIOM *enters*. *There is a long silence.*]

LILIOM. Are you still here? What are you waiting for?

MARIE. You told us to wait.

LILIOM. Must you always interfere? No one is talking to you.

MARIE. You asked us—why we—

LILIOM. Will you keep your mouth shut? What do you suppose I want with two of you? I meant that one of you was to wait. The other can go home.

MARIE. All right.

JULIE. All right.

[Neither starts to go.]

LILIOM. One of you goes home. [To MARIE.] Where do you work?

MARIE. At the Breiers', Damjanovitch Street, Number 20.

LILIOM. And you?

JULIE. I work there, too.

LILIOM. Well, one of you goes home. Which of you wants to stay? [There is no answer.] Come on, speak up, which of you stays?

MARIE [officiously]. She'll lose her job if she stays.

LILIOM. Who will?

MARIE. Julie. She has to be back by seven o'clock.

LILIOM. Is that true? Will they discharge you if you're not back on time?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. Well, wasn't I discharged?

JULIE. Yes—you were discharged, too.

MARIE. Julie, shall I go?

JULIE. I—can't tell you what to do.

MARIE. All right—stay if you like.

LILIOM. You'll be discharged if you do?

MARIE. Shall I go, Julie?

JULIE [embarrassed]. Why do you keep asking me that?

MARIE. You know best what to do.

JULIE [profoundly moved, slowly]. It's all right, Marie, you can go home.

MARIE [exits reluctantly, but comes back, and says uncertainly]. Good-night.

[She waits a moment to see if JULIE will follow her. JULIE does not move. MARIE exits. Meantime it has grown quite dark. During the following scene the gas-lamps far in the distance are lighted one by one. LILIOM and JULIE sit on the bench. From afar, very faintly, comes the music of a calliope. But the music is intermittently heard; now it breaks off, now it resumes again, as if it came down on a fitful wind. Blending with it are the sounds of human voices, now loud, now soft; the blare of a toy trumpet; the confused noises of the show-booths. It grows progressively darker until the end of the scene. There is no moonlight. The spring iridescence glows in the deep blue sky.]

LILIOM. Now we're both discharged. [She does not answer. From now on they speak gradually lower and lower until the end of the scene, which is played almost in whispers. Whistles softly, then:] Have you had your supper?

JULIE. No.

LILIOM. Want to go eat something at the Garden?

JULIE. No.

LILIOM. Anywhere else?

JULIE. No.

LILIOM [whistles softly, then]. You don't come to this park very often, do you? I've only seen you

three times. Been here oftener than that?

JULIE. Oh, yes.

LILIOM. Did you see me?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. And did you know I was Liliom?

JULIE. They told me.

LILIOM [*whistles softly, then*]. Have you got a sweetheart?

JULIE. No.

LILIOM. Don't lie to me.

JULIE. I haven't. If I had, I'd tell you. I've never had one.

LILIOM. What an awful liar you are. I've got a good mind to go away and leave you here.

JULIE. I've never had one.

LILIOM. Tell that to some one else.

JULIE [*reproachfully*]. Why do you insist I have?

LILIOM. Because you stayed here with me the first time I asked you to. You know your way around, you do.

JULIE. No, I don't, Mister Liliom.

LILIOM. I suppose you'll tell me you don't know why you're sitting here—like this, in the dark, alone with me— You wouldn't 'a' stayed so quick, if you hadn't done it before—with some soldier, maybe. This isn't the first time. You wouldn't have been so ready to stay if it was—what *did* you stay for, anyhow?

JULIE. So you wouldn't be left alone.

LILIOM. Alone! God, you're dumb! I don't need to be alone. I can have all the girls I want. Not only servant girls like you, but cooks and governesses—even French girls. I could have twenty of them if I wanted to.

JULIE. I know, Mister Liliom.

LILIOM. What do you know?

JULIE. That all the girls are in love with you. But that's not why I stayed. I stayed because you've been so good to me.

LILIOM. Well, then you can go home.

JULIE. I don't want to go home now.

LILIOM. And what if I go away and leave you sitting here?

JULIE. If you did, I wouldn't go home.

LILIOM. Do you know what you remind me of? A sweetheart I had once—I'll tell you how I met her—One night, at closing time, we had put out the lights in the carousel, and just as I was—

[*He is interrupted by the entrance of two plainclothes policemen. They take their stations on either side of the bench. They are police, searching the park for vagabonds.*]

FIRST POLICEMAN. What are you doing there?

LILIOM. Me?

SECOND POLICEMAN. Stand up when you're spoken to!

[*He taps LILIOM imperatively on the shoulder.*]

FIRST POLICEMAN. What's your name?

LILIOM. Andreas Zavoczki.

[*JULIE begins to weep softly.*]

SECOND POLICEMAN. Stop your bawling. We're not goin' to eat you. We are only making our rounds.

FIRST POLICEMAN. See that he doesn't get away. [*The SECOND POLICEMAN steps closer to LILIOM.*] What's your business?

LILIOM. Barker and bouncer.

SECOND POLICEMAN. They call him

Liliom, Chief. We've had him up a couple of times.

FIRST POLICEMAN. So that's who you are! Who do you work for now?

LILIOM. I work for the widow Muskat.

FIRST POLICEMAN. What are you hanging around here for?

LILIOM. We're just sitting here—me and this girl.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Your sweetheart?

LILIOM. No.

FIRST POLICEMAN [*to JULIE*]. And who are you?

JULIE. Julie Zeller.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Servant girl?

JULIE. Maid-of-all-work for Mister Georg Breier, Number Twenty Damjanovitsch Street.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Show your hands.

SECOND POLICEMAN [*after examining JULIE's hand*]. Servant girl.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Why aren't you at home? What are you doing out here with him?

JULIE. This is my day out, sir.

FIRST POLICEMAN. It would be better for you if you didn't spend it sitting around with a fellow like this.

SECOND POLICEMAN. They'll be disappearing in the bushes as soon as we turn our backs.

FIRST POLICEMAN. He's only after your money. We know this fine fellow. He picks up you silly servant girls and takes what money you have. To-morrow you'll probably be coming around to report him. If you do, I'll throw you out.

JULIE. I haven't any money, sir.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Do you hear that, Liliom?

LILIOM. I'm not looking for her money.

SECOND POLICEMAN [*nudging him warningly*]. Keep your mouth shut.

FIRST POLICEMAN. It is my duty to warn you, my child, what kind of company you're in. He makes a specialty of servant girls. That's why he works in a carousel. He gets hold of a girl, promises to marry her, then he takes her money and her ring.

JULIE. But I haven't got a ring.

SECOND POLICEMAN. You're not to talk unless you're asked a question.

FIRST POLICEMAN. You be thankful that I'm warning you. It's nothing to me what you do. I'm not your father, thank God. But I'm telling you what kind of a fellow he is. By to-morrow morning you'll be coming around to us to report him. Now you be sensible and go home. You needn't be afraid of him. This officer will take you home if you're afraid.

JULIE. Do I *have* to go?

FIRST POLICEMAN. No, you don't *have* to go.

JULIE. Then I'll stay, sir.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Well, you've been warned.

JULIE. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Come on, Berkovics. [*The POLICEMEN exit. JULIE and LILIOM sit on the bench again. There is a brief pause.*]

JULIE. Well, and what then?

LILIOM [*fails to understand*]. Huh?

JULIE. You were beginning to tell me a story.

LILIOM. Me?

JULIE. Yes, about a sweetheart. You said, one night, just as they were putting out the lights of the carousel— That's as far as you got.

LILIOM. Oh, yes, yes, just as the lights were going out, some one came along—a little girl with a big

shawl—you know— She came—eh—from — Say—tell me—ain't you—that is, ain't you at all—afraid of me? The officer told you what kind of a fellow I am—and that I'd take your money away from you—

JULIE. You couldn't take it away—I haven't got any. But if I had—I'd—I'd give it to you—I'd give it all to you.

LILIOM. You would?

JULIE. If you asked me for it.

LILIOM. Have you ever had a fellow you gave money to?

JULIE. No.

LILIOM. Haven't you ever had a sweetheart?

JULIE. No.

LILIOM. Some one you used to go walking with. You've had one like that?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. A soldier?

JULIE. He came from the same village I did.

LILIOM. That's what all the soldiers say. Where *do* you come from, anyway?

JULIE. Not far from here.

[*There is a pause.*]

LILIOM. Were you in love with him?

JULIE. Why do you keep asking me that all the time, Mister Liliom? I wasn't in love with him. We only went walking together.

LILIOM. Where did you walk?

JULIE. In the park.

LILIOM. And your virtue? Where did you lose that?

JULIE. I haven't got any virtue.

LILIOM. Well, you had once.

JULIE. No, I never had. I'm a respectable girl.

LILIOM. Yes, but you gave the soldier something.

JULIE. Why do you question me like that, Mister Liliom?

LILIOM. Did you give him something?

JULIE. You have to. But I didn't love him.

LILIOM. Do you love me?

JULIE. No, Mister Liliom.

LILIOM. Then why do you stay here with me?

JULIE. Um—nothing.

[*There is a pause. The music from afar is plainly heard.*]

LILIOM. Want to dance?

JULIE. No. I have to be very careful.

LILIOM. Of what?

JULIE. My—character.

LILIOM. Why?

JULIE. Because I'm never going to marry. If I was going to marry, it would be different. Then I wouldn't need to worry so much about my character. It doesn't make any difference if you're married. But I shan't marry—and that's why I've got to take care to be a respectable girl.

LILIOM. Suppose I were to say to you—I'll marry you.

JULIE. You?

LILIOM. That frightens you, doesn't it? You're thinking of what the officer said and you're afraid.

JULIE. No, I'm not, Mister Liliom. I don't pay any attention to what he said.

LILIOM. But you wouldn't dare to marry any one like me, would you?

JULIE. I know that—tha—if I loved any one—it wouldn't make any difference to me what he—even if I died for it.

LILIOM. But you wouldn't marry a rough guy like me—that is—eh—if you loved me—

JULIE. Yes, I would—if I loved you, Mister Liliom.

[*There is a pause.*]

LILIOM [*whispers*]. Well—you just said—didn't you?—that you don't love me. Well, why don't you go home then?

JULIE. It's too late now, they'd all be asleep.

LILIOM. Locked out?

JULIE. Certainly.

[*They are silent a while.*]

LILIOM. I think—that even a low-down good-for-nothing—can make a man of himself.

JULIE. Certainly.

[*They are silent again. A lamp-lighter crosses the stage, lights the lamp over the bench, and exits.*]

LILIOM. Are you hungry?

JULIE. No.

[*Another pause.*]

LILIOM. Suppose—you had some money—and I took it from you?

JULIE. Then you could take it, that's all.

LILIOM [*after another brief silence*]. All I have to do—is go back to her

—that Muskat woman—she'll be glad to get me back—then I'd be earning my wages again.

[*She is silent. The twilight folds darker about them.*]

JULIE [*very softly*]. Don't go back—to her—

[*Pause.*]

LILIOM. There are a lot of acacia trees around here.

[*Pause.*]

JULIE. Don't go back to her—

[*Pause.*]

LILIOM. She'd take me back the minute I asked her. I know why—she knows, too—

[*Pause.*]

JULIE. I can smell them, too—acacia blossoms—

[*There is a pause. Some blossoms drift down from the tree-top to the bench. LILIOM picks one up and smells it.*]

LILIOM. White acacias!

JULIE [*after a brief pause*]. The wind brings them down.

[*They are silent. There is a long pause before*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE TWO

[*SCENE: A photographer's "studio," operated by the HOLLUNDERS, on the fringe of the park. It is a dilapidated hovel. The general entrance is back left. Back right there is a window with a sofa before it. The outlook is on the amusement park with perhaps a small Ferris-wheel or the scaffolding of a "scenic-railway" in the background.*]

The door to the kitchen is up left and a black-curtained entrance to the dark-room is down left. Just in front

of the dark-room stands the camera on its tripod. Against the back wall, between the door and window, stands the inevitable photographer's back-ground-screen, ready to be wheeled into place.

It is forenoon. When the curtain rises, MARIE and JULIE are discovered.]

MARIE. And he beat up Hollinger?

JULIE. Yes, he gave him an awful licking.

MARIE. But Hollinger is bigger than he is.

JULIE. He licked him just the same. It isn't size that counts, you know, it's cleverness. And Liliom's awful quick.

MARIE. And then he was arrested?

JULIE. Yes, they arrested him, but they let him go the next day. That makes twice in the two months we've been living here that Liliom's been arrested and let go again.

MARIE. Why do they let him go?

JULIE. Because he is innocent.

[MOTHER HOLLUNDER, a very old woman, sharp-tongued, but in reality quite warm-hearted beneath her formidable exterior, enters at back carrying a few sticks of firewood, and scolding, half to herself.]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. Always wanting something, but never willing to work for it. He won't work, and he won't steal, but he'll use up a poor old widow's last bit of firewood. He'll do that cheerfully enough! A big, strong lout like that lying around all day resting his lazy bones! He ought to be ashamed to look decent people in the face.

JULIE. I'm sorry, Mother Hollunder. . . .

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. Sorry! Better be sorry the lazy good-for-nothing ain't in jail where he belongs instead of in the way of honest, hard-working people.

[She exits into the kitchen.]

MARIE. Who's that?

JULIE. Mrs. Hollunder—my aunt. This is her [*With a sweeping gesture that takes in the camera, dark-room and screen.*] studio. She lets us live here for nothing.

MARIE. What's she fetching the wood for?

JULIE. She brings us everything we need. If it weren't for her I don't know what would become of us. She's a good-hearted soul even if her tongue is sharp.

[*There is a pause.*]

MARIE [*shyly*]. Do you know—I've found out. He's not a soldier.

JULIE. Do you still see him?

MARIE. Oh, yes.

JULIE. Often?

MARIE. Very often. He's asked me—

JULIE. To marry you?

MARIE. To marry me.

JULIE. You see—that proves he isn't a soldier.

[*There is another pause.*]

MARIE [*abashed, yet a bit boastfully*]. Do you know what I'm doing—I'm flirting with him.

JULIE. Flirting?

MARIE. Yes. He asks me to go to the park—and I say I can't go. Then he coaxes me, and promises me a new scarf for my head if I go. But I don't go—even then. . . . So then he walks all the way home with me—and I bid him good-night at the door.

JULIE. Is that what you call flirting?

MARIE. Um-hm. It's sinful, but it's so *thrilling*.

JULIE. Do you ever quarrel?

MARIE [*grandly*]. Only when our *Passionate Love* surges up.

JULIE. Your passionate love?

MARIE. Yes. . . . He takes my hand and we walk along together. Then he wants to swing hands, but I won't let him. I say: "Don't swing my hand"; and he says, "Don't be so stubborn." And then he tries to

swing my hand again, but still I don't let him. And for a long time I don't let him—until in the end I let him. Then we walk along swinging hands—up and down, up and down—just like this. *That* is Passionate Love. It's sinful, but it's awfully *thrilling*.

JULIE. You're happy, aren't you?

MARIE. Happier than—anything—But the most beautiful thing on earth is Ideal Love.

JULIE. What kind is that?

MARIE. Daylight comes about three in the morning this time of the year. When we've been up that long we're all through with flirting and Passionate Love—and then our Ideal Love comes to the surface. It comes like this: I'll be sitting on the bench and Wolf, he holds my hand tight—and he puts his cheek against my cheek and we don't talk . . . we just sit there very quiet. . . . And after a while he gets sleepy, and his head sinks down, and he falls asleep . . . but even in his sleep he holds tight to my hand. And I—I sit perfectly still just looking around me and taking long, deep breaths—for by that time it's morning and the trees and flowers are fresh with dew. But Wolf doesn't smell anything because he's so fast asleep. And I get awfully sleepy myself, but I don't sleep. And we sit like that for a long time. That is Ideal Love—

[*There is a long pause.*]

JULIE [*regretfully; uneasily*]. He went out last night and he hasn't come home yet.

MARIE. Here are sixteen Kreuzer. It was supposed to be carfare to take my young lady to the conservatory—eight there and eight back—but I made her walk. Here—save it with the rest.

JULIE. This makes three gulden, forty-six.

MARIE. Three gulden, forty-six.

JULIE. He won't work at all.

MARIE. Too lazy?

JULIE. No. He never learned a trade, you see, and he can't just go and be a day-laborer—so he just does nothing.

MARIE. That ain't right.

JULIE. No. Have the Breiers got a new maid yet?

MARIE. They've had three since you left. You know, Wolf's going to take a new job. He's going to work for the city. He'll get rent free, too.

JULIE. He won't go back to work at the carousel, either. I ask him why, but he won't tell me— Last Monday he hit me.

MARIE. Did you hit him back?

JULIE. No.

MARIE. Why don't you leave him?

JULIE. I don't want to.

MARIE. I would. I'd leave him.

[*There is a strained silence.*]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*enters, carrying a pot of water; muttering aloud*]. He can play cards, all right. He can fight, too; and take money from poor servant girls. And the police turn their heads the other way— The carpenter was here.

JULIE. Is that water for the soup?

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. The carpenter was here. There's a *man* for you! Dark, handsome, lots of hair, a respectable widower with two children—and money, and a good paying business.

JULIE [*to MARIE*]. It's three gulden sixty-six, not forty-six.

MARIE. Yes, that's what I make it—sixty-six.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He wants

to take her out of this and marry her. This is the fifth time he's been here. He has two children, but—

JULIE. Please don't bother, Aunt Hollunder, I'll get the water myself.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He's waiting outside now.

JULIE. Send him away.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He'll only come back again—and first thing you know that vagabond will get jealous and there'll be a fight. [*Goes out, muttering.*] Oh, he's ready enough to fight, he is. Strike a poor little girl like that! Ought to be ashamed of himself! And the police just let him go on doing as he pleases.

[*Still scolding, she exits at back.*]

MARIE. A carpenter wants to marry you?

JULIE. Yes.

MARIE. Why don't you?

JULIE. Because—

MARIE. Liliom doesn't support you, and he beats you—he thinks he can do whatever he likes just because he's Liliom. He's a bad one.

JULIE. He's not really bad.

MARIE. That night you sat on the bench together—he was gentle then.

JULIE. Yes, he was gentle.

MARIE. And afterwards he got wild again.

JULIE. Afterwards he got wild—sometimes. But that night on the bench . . . he was gentle. He's gentle now, sometimes, very gentle. After supper, when he stands there and listens to the music of the carousel, something comes over him—and he is gentle.

MARIE. Does he say anything?

JULIE. He doesn't say anything. He gets thoughtful and very quiet, and his big eyes stare straight ahead of him.

MARIE. Into your eyes?

JULIE. Not exactly. He's unhappy because he isn't working. That's really why he hit me on Monday.

MARIE. That's a fine reason for hitting you! Beats his wife because he isn't working, the ruffian!

JULIE. It preys on his mind—

MARIE. Did he hurt you?

JULIE [*very eagerly*]. Oh, no.

MRS. MUSKAT [*enters haughtily*]. Good morning. Is Liliom home?

JULIE. No.

MRS. MUSKAT. Gone out?

JULIE. He hasn't come home yet.

MRS. MUSKAT. I'll wait for him.

[*She sits down.*]

MARIE. You've got a lot of gall—to come here.

MRS. MUSKAT. Are you the lady of the house, my dear? Better look out or you'll get a slap in the mouth.

MARIE. How dare you set foot in Julie's house?

MRS. MUSKAT [*to JULIE*]. Pay no attention to her, my child. You know what brings me here. That vagabond, that good-for-nothing, I've come to give him his bread and butter back.

MARIE. He's not dependent on you for his bread.

MRS. MUSKAT [*to JULIE*]. Just ignore her, my child. She's just ignorant.

MARIE [*going*]. Good-bye.

JULIE. Good-bye.

MARIE [*in the doorway, calling back*]. Sixty-six.

JULIE. Yes, sixty-six.

MARIE. Good-bye.

[*She exits. JULIE starts to go toward the kitchen.*]

MRS. MUSKAT. I paid him a krone a day, and on Sunday a gulden. And he got all the beer and cigars he

wanted from the customers. [JULIE *pauses on the threshold, but does not answer.*] And he'd rather starve than beg my pardon. Well, I don't insist on that. I'll take him back without it. [JULIE *does not answer.*] The fact is, the people ask for him—and, you see, I've got to consider business first. It's nothing to me if he starves. I wouldn't be here at all, if it wasn't for business—

[*She pauses, for LILIOM and FICSUR have entered.*]

JULIE. Mrs. Muskat is here.

LILIOM. I see she is.

JULIE. You might say good-morning.

LILIOM. What for? And what do you want, anyhow?

JULIE. I don't want anything.

LILIOM. Then keep your mouth shut. Next thing you'll be starting to nag again about my being out all night and out of work and living on your relations—

JULIE. I'm not saying anything.

LILIOM. But it's all on the tip of your tongue—I know you—now don't start or you'll get another.

[*He paces angrily up and down. They are all a bit afraid of him, and shrink and look away as he passes them. FICSUR shambles from place to place, his eyes cast down as if he were searching for something on the floor.*]

MRS. MUSKAT [*suddenly, to FICSUR*]. You're always dragging him out to play cards and drink with you. I'll have you locked up, I will.

FICSUR. I don't want to talk to you. You're too common.

[*He goes out by the door at back and lingers there in plain view. There is a pause.*]

JULIE. Mrs. Muskat is here.

LILIOM. Well, why doesn't she open her mouth, if she has anything to say?

MRS. MUSKAT. Why do you go around with this man Ficsur? He'll get you mixed up in one of his robberies first thing you know.

LILIOM. What's it to you who I go with? I do what I please. What do you want?

MRS. MUSKAT. You know what I want.

LILIOM. No, I don't.

MRS. MUSKAT. What do you suppose I want? Think I've come just to pay a social call?

LILIOM. Do I owe you anything?

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes, you do—but that's not what I came for. You're a fine one to come to for money! You earn so much these days! You know very well what I'm here for.

LILIOM. You've got Hollinger at the carousel, haven't you?

MRS. MUSKAT. Sure I have.

LILIOM. Well, what else do you want? He's as good as I am.

MRS. MUSKAT. You're quite right, my boy. He's every bit as good as you are. I'd not dream of letting him go. But one isn't enough any more. There's work enough for two—

LILIOM. One was enough when I was there.

MRS. MUSKAT. Well, I might let Hollinger go—

LILIOM. Why let him go, if he's so good?

MRS. MUSKAT [*shrugs her shoulders*]. Yes, he's good.

[*Not once until now has she looked at LILIOM.*]

LILIOM [*to JULIE*]. Ask your aunt if I can have a cup of coffee.

[*JULIE exits into the kitchen.*] So Hollinger is good, is he?

MRS. MUSKAT [*crosses to him and looks him in the face*]. Why don't you stay home and sleep at night? You're a sight to look at.

LILIOM. He's good, is he?

MRS. MUSKAT. Push your hair back from your forehead.

LILIOM. Let my hair be. It's nothing to you.

MRS. MUSKAT. All right. But if I'd told you to let it hang down over your eyes you'd have pushed it back—I hear you've been beating her, this—this—

LILIOM. None of your business.

MRS. MUSKAT. You're a fine fellow! Beating a skinny little thing like that! If you're tired of her, leave her; but there's no use beating the poor—

LILIOM. Leave her, eh? You'd like that, wouldn't you?

MRS. MUSKAT. Don't flatter yourself. [*Quite embarrassed.*] Serves me right, too. If I had any sense I wouldn't have run after you—My God, the things one must do for the sake of business! If I could only sell the carousel I wouldn't be sitting here. . . . Come, Liliom, if you have any sense, you'll come back. I'll pay you well.

LILIOM. The carousel is crowded just the same . . . *without me?*

MRS. MUSKAT. Crowded, yes—but it's not the same.

LILIOM. Then you admit that you *do* miss me.

MRS. MUSKAT. Miss you? Not I. But the silly girls miss you. They're always asking for you. Well, are you going to be sensible and come back?

LILIOM. And leave—her?

MRS. MUSKAT. You beat her, don't you?

LILIOM. No, I don't beat her. What's all this damn fool talk about beating her? I hit her once—that was all—and now the whole city seems to be talking about it. You don't call that beating her, do you?

MRS. MUSKAT. All right, all right. I take it back. I don't want to get mixed up in it.

LILIOM. Beating her! As if I'd beat her—

MRS. MUSKAT. I can't make out why you're so concerned about her. You've been married to her two months—it's plain to see that you're sick of it—and out there is the carousel—and the show booths—and money—and you'd throw it all away. For what? Heavens, how can any one be such a fool? [*Looks at him appraisingly.*] Where have you been all night. You look awful.

LILIOM. It's no business of yours.

MRS. MUSKAT. You never used to look like that. This life is telling on you. [*Pauses.*] Do you know—I've got a new organ.

LILIOM [*softly*]. I know.

MRS. MUSKAT. How did you know?

LILIOM. You can hear it—from here.

MRS. MUSKAT. It's a good one, eh?

LILIOM [*wistfully*]. Very good. Fine. It roars and snorts—so fine.

MRS. MUSKAT. You should hear it close by—it's heavenly. Even the carousel seems to know . . . it goes quicker. I got rid of those two horses—you know, the ones with the broken ears?

LILIOM. What have you put in their place?

MRS. MUSKAT. Guess.

LILIOM. Zebras?

MRS. MUSKAT. No—an automobile.

LILIOM [*transported*]. An automobile—

MRS. MUSKAT. Yes. If you've got any sense you'll come back. What good are you doing here? Out there is your *art*, the only thing you're fit for. You are an artist, not a respectable married man.

LILIOM. *Leave* her—this little—

MRS. MUSKAT. She'll be better off. She'll go back and be a servant girl again. As for you—you're an artist and you belong among artists. All the beer you want, cigars, a krone a day and a gulden on Sunday, and the girls, Liliom, the girls— I've always treated you right, haven't I? I bought you a watch, and—

LILIOM. She's not that kind. She'd never be a servant girl again.

MRS. MUSKAT. I suppose you think she'd kill herself. Don't worry. Heavens, if every girl was to commit suicide just because her—

[*Finishes with a gesture.*]

LILIOM [*stares at her a moment, considering, then with sudden, smiling animation*]. So the people don't like Hollinger?

MRS. MUSKAT. You know very well they don't, you rascal.

LILIOM. Well—

MRS. MUSKAT. You've always been happy at the carousel. It's a great life—pretty girls and beer and cigars and music—a great life and an easy one. I'll tell you what—come back and I'll give you a ring that used to belong to my dear departed husband. Well, will you come?

LILIOM. She's not that kind. She'd never be a servant girl again. But—but—for my part—if I decide

—that needn't make any difference. I can go on living with her even if I do go back to my art—

MRS. MUSKAT. My God!

LILIOM. What's the matter?

MRS. MUSKAT. Who ever heard of a married man—I suppose you think all the girls would be pleased to know that you were running home to your wife every night. It's ridiculous! When the people found out they'd laugh themselves sick—

LILIOM. I know what you want.

MRS. MUSKAT [*refuses to meet his gaze*]. You flatter yourself.

LILIOM. You'll give me that ring, too?

MRS. MUSKAT [*pushes the hair back from his forehead*]. Yes.

LILIOM. I'm not happy in this house.

MRS. MUSKAT [*still stroking his hair*]. Nobody takes care of you.

[*They are silent. JULIE enters, carrying a cup of coffee. MRS. MUSKAT removes her hand from LILIOM's head. There is a pause.*]

LILIOM. Do you want anything?

JULIE. No.

[*There is a pause. She exits slowly into the kitchen.*]

MRS. MUSKAT. The old woman says there is a carpenter, a widower, who—

LILIOM. I know—I know—

JULIE [*reëntering*]. Liliom, before I forget, I have something to tell you.

LILIOM. All right.

JULIE. I've been wanting to tell you—in fact, I was going to tell you yesterday—

LILIOM. Go ahead.

JULIE. But I must tell you alone—

if you'll come in—it will only take a minute.

LILIOM. Don't you see I'm busy now? Here I am talking business and you interrupt with—

JULIE. It'll only take a minute.

LILIOM. Get out of here, or—

JULIE. But I tell you it will only take a minute—

LILIOM. Will you get out of here?

JULIE [*courageously*]. No.

LILIOM [*rising*]. What's that!

JULIE. No.

MRS. MUSKAT [*rises, too*]. Now don't start fighting. I'll go out and look at the photographs in the showcase a while and come back later for your answer.

[*She exits at back.*]

JULIE. You can hit me again if you like—don't look at me like that. I'm not afraid of you. . . . I'm not afraid of any one. I told you I had something to tell you.

LILIOM. Well, out with it—quick.

JULIE. I can't tell you so quick. Why don't you drink your coffee?

LILIOM. Is that what you wanted to tell me?

JULIE. No. By the time you've drunk your coffee I'll have told you.

LILIOM [*gets the coffee and sips it*]. Well?

JULIE. Yesterday my head ached—and you asked me—

LILIOM. Yes—

JULIE. Well—you see—that's what it is—

LILIOM. Are you sick?

JULIE. No. . . . But you wanted to know what my headaches came from—and you said I seemed—changed.

LILIOM. Did I? I guess I meant the carpenter.

JULIE. I've been—what? The car-

penter? No. It's something entirely different—it's awful hard to tell—but you'll have to know sooner or later—I'm not a bit—scared—because it's a perfectly natural thing—

LILIOM [*puts the coffee cup on the table*]. What?

JULIE. When—when a man and woman—live together—

LILIOM. Yes.

JULIE. I'm going to have a baby.

[*She exits swiftly at back. There is a pause. FICSUR appears at the open window and looks in.*]

LILIOM. Ficsur! [FICSUR *sticks his head in.*] Say, Ficsur—Julie is going to have a baby.

FICSUR. Yes? What of it?

LILIOM. Nothing. [*Suddenly.*] Get out of here.

[FICSUR's *head is quickly withdrawn.* MRS. MUSKAT *re-enters.*]

MRS. MUSKAT. Has she gone?

LILIOM. Yes.

MRS. MUSKAT. I might as well give you ten kronen in advance. [*Opens her purse. LILIOM takes up his coffee cup.*] Here you are. [*She proffers some coins. LILIOM ignores her.*] Why don't you take it?

LILIOM [*very nonchalantly, his cup poised ready to drink*]. Go home, Mrs. Muskat.

MRS. MUSKAT. What's the matter with you?

LILIOM. Go home [*Sips his coffee.*] and let me finish my coffee in peace. Don't you see I'm at breakfast?

MRS. MUSKAT. Have you gone crazy?

LILIOM. Will you get out of here?

[*Turns to her threateningly.*]

MRS. MUSKAT [*restoring the coins*]

to her purse]. I'll never speak to you again as long as you live.

LILIOM. That worries me a lot.

MRS. MUSKAT. Good-bye.

LILIOM. Good-bye. [*As she exits, he calls.*] Ficsur! [*Ficsur enters.*] Tell me, Ficsur. You said you knew a way to get a whole lot of money—

FICSUR. Sure I do.

LILIOM. How much?

FICSUR. More than you ever had in your life before. You leave it to an old hand like me.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*enters from the kitchen*]. In the morning he must have his coffee, and at noon his soup, and in the evening coffee again—and plenty of firewood—and I'm expected to furnish it all. Give me back my cup and saucer.

[*The show booths of the amusement-park have opened for business. The familiar noises begin to sound; clear above them all, but far in the distance, sounds the organ of the carousel.*]

LILIOM. Now, Aunt Hollunder.

[*From now until the fall of the curtain it is apparent that the sound of the organ makes him more and more uneasy.*]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. And you, you vagabond, get out of here this minute or I'll call my son—

FICSUR. I have nothing to do with the likes of him. He's too common.

[*But he slinks out at back.*]

LILIOM. Aunt Hollunder!

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. What now?

LILIOM. When your son was born—when you brought him into the world—

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. Well?

LILIOM. Nothing.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*muttering as she exits*]. Sleep it off, you good-for-nothing lout. Drink and play cards all night long—that's all you know how to do—and take the bread out of poor people's mouths—you can do that, too.

[*She exits.*]

LILIOM. Ficsur!

FICSUR [*at the window*]. Julie's going to have a baby. You told me before.

LILIOM. This scheme—about the cashier of the leather factory—there's money in it?

FICSUR. Lots of money—but—it takes two to pull it off.

LILIOM [*meditatively*]. Yes. [*Un-easily.*] All right, Ficsur. Go away—and come back later.

[*Ficsur vanishes. The organ in the distant carousel drones incessantly. Liliom listens a while, then goes to the door and calls.*]

LILIOM. Aunt Hollunder! [*With naïve joy.*] Julie's going to have a baby. [*Then he goes to the window, jumps on the sofa, looks out. Suddenly, in a voice that overtops the droning of the organ, he shouts as if addressing the far-off carousel.*] I'm going to be a father.

JULIE [*enters from the kitchen*]. Liliom! What's the matter? What's happened?

LILIOM [*coming down from the sofa*]. Nothing.

[*Throws himself on the sofa, buries his face in the cushion.*]

JULIE watches him a moment, comes over to him and covers him with a shawl. Then she

goes on tiptoe to the door at back and remains standing in the doorway, looking out and

listening to the droning of the organ.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

BURLINGAM

PUBLI

LIE.

SCENE THREE

[SCENE: *The setting is the same, later that afternoon. LILIOM is sitting opposite FICSUR, who is teaching him a song. JULIE hovers in the background, engaged in some household task.*]

FICSUR. Listen now. Here's the third verse. [*Sings hoarsely.*]

"Look out, look out, my pretty lad,
The damn police are on your trail;
The nicest girl you ever had
Has now commenced to weep and wail:

Look out here come the damn police,
The damn police,
The damn police,
Look out here comes the damn police,
They'll get you every time."

LILIOM [*sings*].

"Look out, look out, my pretty lad,
The damn police—"

FICSUR AND LILIOM [*sing together*].

"Are on your trail
The nicest girl you ever had
Has now commenced to weep and wail."

LILIOM [*alone*].

"Look out here comes the damn police,
The damn police,
The damn police—"

[*JULIE, troubled and uneasy, looks from one to the other, then exits into the kitchen.*]

FICSUR [*when she has gone, comes quickly over to LILIOM and speaks*

furtively]. As you go down Franzen Street you come to the railroad embankment. Beyond that—all the way to the leather factory—there's not a thing in sight, not even a watchman's hut.

LILIOM. And does he always come that way?

FICSUR. Yes. Not along the embankment, but down below along the path across the fields. Since last year he's been going alone. Before that he always used to have some one with him.

LILIOM. Every Saturday?

FICSUR. Every Saturday.

LILIOM. And the money? Where does he keep it?

FICSUR. In a leather bag. The whole week's pay for the workmen at the factory.

LILIOM. Much?

FICSUR. Sixteen thousand kronen. Quite a haul, what?

LILIOM. What's his name?

FICSUR. Linzman. He's a Jew.

LILIOM. The cashier?

FICSUR. Yes—but when he gets a knife between his ribs—or if I smash his skull for him—he won't be a cashier any more.

LILIOM. Does he have to be killed?

FICSUR. No, he doesn't *have* to be. He can give up the money *without* being killed—but most of these cashiers are peculiar—they'd rather be killed.

[*JULIE reënters, pretends to get something on the other side of*

the room, then exits at back. During the ensuing dialogue she keeps coming in and out in the same way, showing plainly that she is suspicious and anxious. She attempts to overhear what they are saying and, in spite of their caution, does catch a word here and there, which adds to her disquiet. FICSUR, catching sight of her, abruptly changes the conversation.]

FICSUR. And the next verse is:

"And when you're in the prison cell

They'll feed you bread and water."

FICSUR AND LILIOM [*sing together*].
"They'll make your little sweetheart tell

Them all the things you brought her.

Look out here comes the damn police,

The damn police,

The damn police.

Look out here comes the damn police

They'll get you every time."

LILIOM [*sings alone*].

"And when you're in the prison cell

They'll feed you bread and water—"

[*Breaks off as JULIE exits.*] And when it's done, do we start right off for America?

FICSUR. No.

LILIOM. What then?

FICSUR. We bury the money for six months. That's the usual time. And after the sixth month we dig it up again.

LILIOM. And then?

FICSUR. Then you go on living

just as usual for six months more—you don't touch a heller of the money.

LILIOM. In six months the baby will be born.

FICSUR. Then we'll take the baby with us, too. Three months before the time you'll go to work so as to be able to say you saved up your wages to get to America.

LILIOM. Which of us goes up and talks to him?

FICSUR. One of us talks to him with his mouth and the other talks with his knife. Depends on which you'd rather do. I'll tell you what—you talk to him with your mouth.

LILIOM. Do you hear that?

FICSUR. What?

LILIOM. Outside . . . like the rattle of swords. [FICSUR *listens*. After a pause, LILIOM *continues*.] What do I say to him?

FICSUR. You say "good evening" to him and: "Excuse me, sir; can you tell me the time?"

LILIOM. And then what?

FICSUR. By that time I'll have struck him—and then you take your knife—

[*He stops as a POLICEMAN enters at back.*]

POLICEMAN. Good day!

FICSUR AND LILIOM [*in unison*].
Good day!

FICSUR AND LILIOM [*calling toward the kitchen*]. Hey, photographer, come out. . . . Here's a customer. [*There is a pause. The POLICEMAN waits. FICSUR sings softly.*]

"And when you're in the prison cell
They'll feed you bread and water
They'll make your little sweetheart tell—"

LILIOM AND FICSUR [*sing together, low*].

"Them all the things you brought her.

Look out here comes the—"

[*They hum the rest so as not to let the POLICEMAN hear the words "the damn police." As they sing, MRS. HOLLUNDER and her son enter.*]

POLICEMAN. Do you make cabinet photographs?

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. Certainly, sir. [*Points to a rack of photographs on the wall.*] Take your choice, sir. Would you like one full length?

POLICEMAN. Yes, full length.

[*MOTHER HOLLUNDER pushes out the camera while her son poses the POLICEMAN, runs from him to the camera and back again, now altering the pose, now ducking under the black cloth and pushing the camera nearer. Meanwhile MOTHER HOLLUNDER has fetched a plate from the dark-room and thrust it into the camera. While this is going on, LILIOM and FICSUR, their heads together, speak in very low tones.*]

LILIOM. Belong around here?

FICSUR. Not around here.

LILIOM. Where, then?

FICSUR. Suburban.

[*There is a pause.*]

LILIOM [*bursts out suddenly in a rather grotesquely childish and overstrained lament*]. O God, what a dirty life I'm leading—God, God!

FICSUR [*reassuring him benevolently*]. Over in America it will be better, all right.

LILIOM. What's over there?

FICSUR [*virtuously*]. Factories . . . industries—

YOUNG HOLLUNDER [*to the POLICEMAN*]. Now, quite still, please. One,

two, three. [*Defly removes the cover of the lens and in a few seconds restores it.*] Thank you.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. The picture will be ready in five minutes.

POLICEMAN. Good. I'll come back in five minutes. How much do I owe you?

YOUNG HOLLUNDER [*with exaggerated deference*]. You don't need to pay in advance, Mr. Commissioner.

[*The POLICEMAN salutes condescendingly and exits at back.*

MOTHER HOLLUNDER carries the plate into the dark-room.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER, after pushing the camera back in place, follows her.]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*muttering angrily as she passes FICSUR and LILIOM*]. You hang around and dirty the whole place up! Why don't you go take a walk? Things are going so well with you that you have to sing, eh? [*Confronting FICSUR suddenly.*] Weren't you frightened sick when you saw the policeman?

FICSUR [*with loathing*]. Go 'way, or I'll step on you.

[*She exits into the dark-room.*]

LILIOM. They like Hollinger at the carousel?

FICSUR. I should say they do.

LILIOM. Did you see the Muskat woman, too?

FICSUR. Sure. She takes care of Hollinger's hair.

LILIOM. Combs his hair?

FICSUR. She fixes him all up.

LILIOM. Let her fix him all she likes.

FICSUR [*urging him toward the kitchen door*]. Go on. Now's your chance.

LILIOM. What for?

FICSUR. To get the knife.

LILIOM. What knife?

FICSUR. The kitchen knife. I've got a pocket-knife, but if he shows fight, we'll let him have the big knife.

LILIOM. What for? If he gets ugly I'll bat him one over the head that'll make him squint for the rest of his life.

FICSUR. You've got to have something on you. You can't slit his throat with a bat over the head.

LILIOM. Must his throat be slit?

FICSUR. No, it *mustn't*. But if he asks for it. [*There is a pause.*] You'd like to sail on the big steamer, wouldn't you? And you want to see the factories over there, don't you? But you're not willing to inconvenience yourself a little for them.

LILIOM. If I take the knife, Julie will see me.

FICSUR. Take it so she won't see you.

LILIOM [*advances a few paces toward the kitchen. The POLICEMAN enters at back. LILIOM knocks at the door of the dark-room*]. Here's the policeman!

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*coming out*]. One minute more, please. Just a minute.

[*She reënters the dark-room.*

LILIOM *hesitates a moment, then exits into the kitchen.*

The POLICEMAN *scrutinizes*

FICSUR *mockingly.*]

FICSUR [*returns his stare, walks a few paces toward him, then deliberately turns his back. Suddenly he wheels around, points at the POLICEMAN and addresses him in a teasing, childish tone*]. Christiana Street at the corner of Retti!

POLICEMAN [*amazed, self-conscious*]. How do you know that?

FICSUR. I used to practice my profession in that neighborhood.

POLICEMAN. What is your profession?

FICSUR. Professor of pianola—

[*The POLICEMAN glares, aware that the man is joking with him, twirls his mustache indignantly. YOUNG HOLLUNDER comes out of the dark-room and gives him the finished pictures.*]

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. Here you are, sir.

[*The POLICEMAN examines the photographs, pays for them, starts to go, stops, glares at FICSUR and exits. When he is gone, FICSUR goes to the doorway and looks out after him. YOUNG HOLLUNDER exits.*

LILIOM *reënters, buttoning his coat.*]

FICSUR [*turns, sees LILIOM*]. What are you staring at?

LILIOM. I'm not staring.

FICSUR. What then are you doing?

LILIOM. I'm thinking it over.

FICSUR [*comes very close to him*]. Tell me then—what will you say to him?

LILIOM [*unsteadily*]. I'll say—"Good evening—Excuse me, sir—Can you tell me the time?" And suppose he answers me, what do I say to him?

FICSUR. He won't answer you.

LILIOM. Don't you think so?

FICSUR. No. [*Feeling for the knife under LILIOM's coat.*] Where is it? Where did you put it?

LILIOM [*stonily*]. Left side.

FICSUR. That's right—over your heart. [*Feels it.*] Ah—there it is—there—there's the blade—quite a big fellow, isn't it—ah, here it begins to

get narrower. [*Reaches the tip of the knife.*] And here is its eye—that's what it sees with. [*JULIE enters from the kitchen, passes them slowly, watching them in silent terror, then stops. FICSUR nudges LILIOM.*] Sing, come on, sing!

LILIOM [*in a quavering voice*].

"Look out for the damn police."

FICSUR [*joining in, cheerily, loudly, marking time with the swaying of his body*].

"Look out, look out, my pretty lad."

LILIOM. "—look out, my pretty lad." [*JULIE goes out at back. LILIOM's glance follows her. When she has gone, he turns to FICSUR.*] At night—in my dreams—if his ghost comes back—what will I do then?

FICSUR. His ghost won't never come back.

LILIOM. Why not?

FICSUR. A Jew's ghost don't come back.

LILIOM. Well, then—afterwards—

FICSUR [*impatiently*]. What do you mean—afterwards?

LILIOM. In the next world—when I come up before the Lord God—what'll I say then?

FICSUR. The likes of you will never come up before Him.

LILIOM. Why not?

FICSUR. Have you ever come up before the high court?

LILIOM. No.

FICSUR. Our kind comes up before the police magistrate—and the highest we *ever* get is the criminal court.

LILIOM. Will it be the same in the next world?

FICSUR. Just the same. We'll come up before a police magistrate, same as we did in this world.

LILIOM. A police magistrate?

FICSUR. Sure. For the rich folks.—the Heavenly Court. For us poor people—only a police magistrate. For the rich folks—fine music and angels. For us—

LILIOM. For us?

FICSUR. For us, my son, there's only justice. In the next world, there'll be lots of justice, yes, nothing but justice. And where there's justice there must be police magistrates; and where there're police magistrates, people like us get—

LILIOM [*interrupting*]. Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?

[*Lays his hand over his heart.*]

FICSUR. What do you put your hand there for?

LILIOM. My heart is jumping—under the knife.

FICSUR. Put it on the other side then. [*Looks out at the sky.*] It's time we started—we'll walk slow—

LILIOM. It's too early.

FICSUR. Come on.

[*As they are about to go, JULIE appears in the doorway at back, obstructing the way.*]

JULIE. Where are you going with him?

LILIOM. Where am I going with him?

JULIE. Stay home.

LILIOM. No.

JULIE. Stay home. It's going to rain soon, and you'll get wet.

FICSUR. It won't rain.

JULIE. How do you know?

FICSUR. I always get notice in advance.

JULIE. Stay home. This evening the carpenter's coming. I've asked him to give you work.

LILIOM. I'm not a carpenter.

JULIE [*more and more anxious, though she tries to conceal it*]. Stay home. Marie's coming with her intended to have their picture taken. She wants to introduce us to her intended husband.

LILIOM. I've seen enough intended husbands—

JULIE. Stay home. Marie's bringing some money, and I'll give it all to you.

LILIOM [*approaching the door*]. I'm going—for a walk—with Ficsur. We'll be right back.

JULIE [*forcing a smile to keep back her tears*]. If you stay home, I'll get you a glass of beer—or wine, if you prefer.

FICSUR. Coming or not?

JULIE. I'm not angry with you any more for hitting me.

LILIOM [*gruffly, but his gruffness is simulated to hide the fact that he cannot bear the sight of her suffering*]. Stand out of the way—or I'll— [*He clenches his fist.*] Let me out!

JULIE [*trembling*]. What have you got under your coat?

LILIOM [*produces from his pocket a greasy pack of cards*]. Cards.

JULIE [*trembling, speaks very low*]. What's under your coat?

LILIOM. Let me out!

JULIE [*obstructing the way. Speaks quickly, eagerly, in a last effort to detain him.*] Marie's intended knows about a place for a married couple without children to be caretakers of a house on Arader Street. Rent free, a kitchen of your own, and the privilege of keeping chickens—

LILIOM. Get out of the way!

[JULIE stands aside. LILIOM exits. FICSUR follows him.

JULIE remains standing medita-

tively in the doorway. MOTHER HOLLUNDER comes out of the kitchen.]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. I can't find my kitchen knife anywhere. Have you seen anything of it?

JULIE [*horrified*]. No.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. It was on the kitchen table just a few minutes ago. No one was in there except Liliom.

JULIE. He didn't take it.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. No one else was in there.

JULIE. What would Liliom want with a kitchen knife?

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He'd sell it and spend the money on drink.

JULIE. It just so happens—see how unjust you are to him—it just so happens that I went through all of Liliom's pockets just now—I wanted to see if he had any money on him. But he had nothing but a pack of cards.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*returns to the kitchen, grumbling*]. Cards in his pocket—cards! The fine gentlemen have evidently gone off to their club to play a little game.

[*She exits. After a pause MARIE, happy and beaming, appears in the doorway at back, and enters, followed by WOLF.*]

MARIE. Here we are! [*She takes WOLF by the hand and leads him, grinning shyly, to JULIE, who has turned at her call.*] Hello!

JULIE. Hello.

MARIE. Well, we're here.

JULIE. Yes.

WOLF [*bows awkwardly and extends his hand*]. My name is Wolf Beifeld.

JULIE. My name is Julie Zeller.

[*They shake hands. There is an*

embarrassed silence. Then, to relieve the situation, WOLF takes JULIE's hand again and shakes it vigorously.]

MARIE. Well—this is Wolf.

WOLF. Yes.

JULIE. Yes.

[Another awkward silence.]

MARIE. Where is Liliom?

WOLF. Yes, where is your husband?

JULIE. He's out.

MARIE. Where?

JULIE. Just for a walk.

MARIE. Is he?

JULIE. Yes.

WOLF. Oh!

[Another silence.]

MARIE. Wolf's got a new place. After the first of the month he won't have to stand outside any more. He's going to work in a club after the first of the month.

WOLF *[apologetically]*. She don't know yet how to explain these things just right—hehehe— Beginning the first I'm to be second steward at the Burger Club—a good job, if one conducts oneself properly.

JULIE. Yes?

WOLF. The pay—is quite good—but the main thing is the tips. When they play cards there's always a bit for the steward. The tips, I may say, amount to twenty, even thirty kronen every night.

MARIE. Yes.

WOLF. We've rented two rooms for ourselves to start with—and if things go well—

MARIE. Then we'll buy a house in the country.

WOLF. If one only tends to business and keeps honest. Of course, in the country we'll miss the city life, but if the good Lord sends us

children—it's much healthier for children in the country.

[There is a brief pause.]

MARIE. Wolf's nice looking, isn't he?

JULIE. Yes.

MARIE. And he's a good boy, Wolf.

JULIE. Yes.

MARIE. The only thing is—he's a Jew.

JULIE. Oh, well, you can get used to that.

MARIE. Well, aren't you going to wish us luck?

JULIE. Of course I do.

[She embraces MARIE.]

MARIE. And aren't you going to kiss Wolf, too?

JULIE. Him, too.

[She embraces WOLF, remains quite still a moment, her head resting on his shoulder.]

WOLF. Why are you crying, my dear Mrs. —

[He looks questioningly at MARIE over JULIE's shoulder.]

MARIE. Because she has such a good heart.

[She becomes sentimental, too.]

WOLF *[touched]*. We thank you for your heartfelt sympathy—

[He cannot restrain his own tears. There is a pause before MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son enter. YOUNG HOLLUNDER immediately busies himself with the camera.]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. Now if you don't mind, we'll do it right away, before it gets too dark. *[She leads MARIE and WOLF into position before the background-screen. Here they immediately fall into an awkward pose, smiling mechanically.]* Full length?

MARIE. Please. Both figures full length.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. Bride and groom?

MARIE. Yes.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER } *speak in*

YOUNG HOLLUNDER } *unison in*
loud, professionally expressionless tones]. The lady looks at the gentleman and the gentleman looks straight into the camera.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER [*poses first MARIE, then WOLF*]. Now, if you please.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER [*who has crept under the black cloth, calls in muffled tones*]. That's good—that's very good!

MARIE [*stonily rigid, but very happy, trying to speak without altering her expression*]. Julie, dear, do we look all right?

JULIE. Yes, dear.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. Now, if you please, hold still. I'll count up to three, and then you must hold perfectly still. [*Grasps the cover of the lens and calls threateningly.*] One—two—three!

[*He removes the cover; there is utter silence. But as he speaks the word "one" there is heard, very faintly in the distance, the refrain of the thieves' song which FICSUR and LILIOM have been singing. The refrain continues until the fall of the curtain. As he speaks the word "three" everybody is perfectly rigid save JULIE, who lets her head sink slowly to the table. The distant refrain dies out.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

BURLING

PUBLI

LIE.

SCENE FOUR

[SCENE: *In the fields on the outskirts of the city. At back a railroad embankment crosses the stage obliquely. At center of the embankment stands a red and white signal flag, and near it a little red signal lamp which is not yet lighted. Here also a wooden stairway leads up to the embankment.*

At the foot of the embankment to the right is a pile of used railroad ties. In the background a telegraph pole, beyond it a view of trees, fences and fields; still further back a factory building and a cluster of little dwellings.

It is six o'clock of the same afternoon. Dusk has begun to fall.

LILIOM and FICSUR are discovered

on the stairway looking after the train which has just passed.]

LILIOM. Can you still hear it snort?

FICSUR. Listen!

[*They watch the vanishing train.*]

LILIOM. If you put your ear on the tracks you can hear it go all the way to Vienna.

FICSUR. Huh!

LILIOM. The one that just puffed past us—it goes all the way to Vienna.

FICSUR. No further?

LILIOM. Yes—further, too.

[*There is a pause.*]

FICSUR. It must be near six. [*As*

LILIOM *ascends the steps.*] Where are you going?

LILIOM. Don't be afraid. I'm not giving you the slip.

FICSUR. Why should you give me the slip? That cashier has sixteen thousand kronen on him. Just be patient till he comes, then you can talk to him, nice and polite.

LILIOM. I say, "Good evening—excuse me, sir; what time is it?"

FICSUR. Then he tells you what time it is.

LILIOM. Suppose he don't come?

FICSUR [*coming down the steps*]. Nonsense! He's got to come. He pays off the workmen every Saturday. And this is Saturday, ain't it? [*LILIOM has ascended to the top of the stairway and is gazing along the tracks.*] What are you looking at up there?

LILIOM. The tracks go on and on—there's no end to them.

FICSUR. What's that to stare about?

LILIOM. Nothing—only I always look after the train. When you stand down there at night it snorts past you, and spits down.

FICSUR. Spits?

LILIOM. Yes, the engine. It spits down. And then the whole train rattles past and away—and you stand there—spat on—but it draws your eyes along with it.

FICSUR. Draws your eyes along?

LILIOM. Yes—whether you want to or not, you've got to look after it—as long as the tiniest bit of it is in sight.

FICSUR. Swell people sit in it.

LILIOM. And read newspapers.

FICSUR. And smoke cigars.

LILIOM. And inhale the smoke.

[*There is a short silence.*]

FICSUR. Is he coming?

LILIOM. Not yet. [*Silence again.*

LILIOM *comes down, speaks low, confidentially.*] Do you hear the telegraph wires?

FICSUR. I hear them when the wind blows.

LILIOM. Even when the wind doesn't blow you can hear them humming, humming— People talk through them.

FICSUR. Who?

LILIOM. Jews.

FICSUR. No—they telegraph.

LILIOM. They talk through them and from some other place they get answered. And it all goes through the iron strings—that's why they hum like that—they hum-m—

FICSUR. What do they hum?

LILIOM. They hum! ninety-nine, ninety-nine. Just listen.

FICSUR. What for?

LILIOM. That sparrow's listening, too. He's cocked one eye and looks at me as if to say: "I'd like to know what they're talking about."

FICSUR. You're looking at a bird?

LILIOM. He's looking at me, too.

FICSUR. Listen, you're sick! There's something the matter with you. Do you know what it is? Money. That bird has no money, either; that's why he cocks his eye.

LILIOM. Maybe.

FICSUR. Whoever has money don't cock his eye.

LILIOM. What does he do then?

FICSUR. He does most anything he wants. But nobody works unless he has no money. We'll soon have money ourselves.

LILIOM. I say, "Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me what time it is!"

FICSUR. He's not coming yet.

Got the cards? [LILIOM gives him the pack of cards.] Got any money?

LILIOM [takes some coins from his trousers pocket and counts]. Eleven.

FICSUR [sits astride on the pile of ties and looks off left]. All right—eleven.

LILIOM [sitting astride on the ties facing him]. Put it up.

FICSUR [puts the money on the ties; rapidly shuffles the cards]. We'll play twenty-one. I'll bank.

[He deals deftly.]

LILIOM [looks at his card]. Good. I'll bet the bank.

FICSUR. Must have an ace.

[Deals him a second card.]

LILIOM. Another one. [He gets another card.] Another. [Gets still another.] Over! [Throws down his cards. FICSUR gathers in the money.] Come on!

FICSUR. Come on what? Got no more money, have you?

LILIOM. No.

FICSUR. Then the game's over—unless you want to—

LILIOM. What?

FICSUR. Play on credit.

LILIOM. You'll trust me?

FICSUR. No—but—I'll deduct it.

LILIOM. Deduct it from what?

FICSUR. From your share of the money. If you win you deduct from my share.

LILIOM [looks over his shoulder to see if the cashier is coming; nervous and ashamed]. All right. How much is bank?

FICSUR. That cashier is bringing us sixteen thousand kronen. Eight thousand of that is mine. Well, then, the bank is eight thousand.

LILIOM. Good.

FICSUR. Whoever has the most luck will have the most money.

[He deals.]

LILIOM. Six hundred kronen. [FICSUR gives him another card.] Enough.

FICSUR [laying out his own cards]. Twenty-one.

[He shuffles rapidly.]

LILIOM [moves excitedly nearer to FICSUR]. Well, then, double or nothing.

FICSUR [dealing]. Double or nothing.

LILIOM [gets a card]. Enough.

FICSUR [laying out his own cards]. Twenty-one.

[Shuffles rapidly again.]

LILIOM [in alarm]. You're not cheating?

FICSUR. Me? Do I look like a cheat?

[Deals the cards again.]

LILIOM [glances nervously over his shoulder]. A thousand.

FICSUR [nonchalantly]. Kronen?

LILIOM. Kronen. [He gets a card.] Another one. [Gets another card.] Over again!

[Like an inexperienced gambler who is losing heavily, LILIOM is very nervous. He plays dazedly, wildly, irrationally. From now on it is apparent that his only thought is to win his money back.]

FICSUR. That makes twelve hundred you owe.

LILIOM. Double or nothing. [He gets a card. He is greatly excited.] Another one. [Gets another card.] Another.

[Throws down three cards.]

FICSUR [bends over and adds up the sum on the ground]. Ten—

fourteen—twenty-three— You owe two thousand, four hundred.

LILIOM. Now what?

FICSUR [*takes a card out of the deck and gives it to him*]. Here's the red ace. You can play double or nothing again.

LILIOM [*eagerly*]. Good. [*Gets another card.*] Enough.

FICSUR [*turns up his own cards*]. Nineteen.

LILIOM. You win again. [*Almost imploring.*] Give me an ace again. Give me the green one. [*Takes a card.*] Double or nothing.

FICSUR. Not any more.

LILIOM. Why not?

FICSUR. Because if you lose you won't be able to pay. Double would be nine thousand six hundred. And you've only got eight thousand altogether.

LILIOM [*greatly excited*]. That—that—I call that—a dirty trick!

FICSUR. Three thousand, two hundred. That's all you can put up.

LILIOM [*eagerly*]. All right, then—three thousand, two hundred. [*FICSUR deals him a card.*] Enough.

FICSUR. I've got an ace myself. Now we'll have to take our time and squeeze 'em. [*LILIOM pushes closer to him as he takes up his cards and slowly, intently unfolds them.*] Twenty-one.

[*He quickly puts the cards in his pocket. There is a pause.*]

LILIOM. Now—now—I'll tell you now—you're a crook, a low-down— [*Now LINZMAN enters at right. He is a strong, robust, red-bearded Jew about 40 years of age. At his side he carries a leather bag slung by a strap from his shoulder. FICSUR coughs warningly, moves to the right between LINZMAN and the embank-*

ment, pauses just behind LINZMAN and follows him. LILIOM stands bewildered a few paces to the left of the railroad ties. He finds himself facing LINZMAN. Trembling in every limb.] Good evening. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me the time?

[*FICSUR springs silently at LINZMAN, the little knife in his right hand. But LINZMAN catches FICSUR's right hand with his own left and forces FICSUR to his knees. Simultaneously LINZMAN thrusts his right hand into his coat pocket and produces a revolver which he points at LILIOM's breast. LILIOM is standing two paces away from the revolver. There is a long pause.*]

LINZMAN [*in a low, even voice*]. It is twenty-five minutes past six. [*Pauses, looks ironically down at FICSUR.*] It's lucky I grabbed the hand with the knife instead of the other one. [*Pauses again, looks approvingly from one to the other.*] Two fine birds! [*To FICSUR.*] I should live so—Rothschild has more luck than you. [*To LILIOM.*] I'd advise you to keep nice and quiet. If you make one move, you'll get two bullets in you. Just look into the barrel. You'll see some little things in there made of lead.

FICSUR. Let me go. I didn't do anything.

LINZMAN. [*mockingly shakes the hand which still holds the knife*]. And this? What do you call this? Oh, yes, I know. You thought I had an apple in my pocket, and you wanted to peel it. That's it. Forgive me for my error. I beg your pardon, sir.

LILIOM. But I—I—

LINZMAN. Yes, my son, I know. It's so simple. You only asked what time it is. Well, it's twenty-five minutes after six.

FICSUR. Let us go, honorable sir. We didn't do anything to you.

LINZMAN. In the first place, my son, I'm not an honorable sir. In the second place, for the same money, you could have said Your Excellency. But in the third place you'll find it very hard to beg off by flattering me.

LILIOM. But I—I really didn't do anything to you.

LINZMAN. Look behind you, my boy. Don't be afraid. Look behind you, but don't run away or I'll have to shoot you down. [LILIOM turns his head slowly around.] Who's coming up there?

LILIOM [looking at LINZMAN]. Policemen.

LINZMAN [to FICSUR]. You hold still, or— [To LILIOM teasingly.] How many policemen are there?

LILIOM [his eyes cast down]. Two.

LINZMAN. And what are the policemen sitting on?

LILIOM. Horses.

LINZMAN. And which can run faster, a horse or a man?

LILIOM. A horse.

LINZMAN. There, you see. It would be hard to get away now. [Laughs.] I never saw such an unlucky pair of highway robbers. I can't imagine worse luck. Just today I had to put a pistol in my pocket. And even if I hadn't—old Linzman is a match for four like you. But even that isn't all. Did you happen to notice, you oxen, what direction I came from? From the factory, didn't I? When I went there I had a nice bit of money with

me. Sixteen thousand crowns! But now—not a heller. [Calls off left.] Hey, come quicker, will you? This fellow is pulling pretty strong. [FICSUR frees himself with a mighty wrench and darts rapidly off. As LINZMAN aims his pistol at the vanishing FICSUR, LILIOM runs up the steps to the embankment. LINZMAN hesitates, perceives that LILIOM is the better target, points the pistol at him.] Stop, or I'll shoot! [Calls off left to the POLICEMEN.] Why don't you come down off your horses?

[His pistol is leveled at LILIOM, who stands on the embankment, facing the audience. From the left on the embankment a POLICEMAN appears, revolver in hand.]

FIRST POLICEMAN. Stop!

LINZMAN. Well, my boy, do you still want to know what time it is? From ten to twelve years in prison!

LILIOM. You won't get me! [LINZMAN laughs derisively. LILIOM is now three or four paces from the POLICEMAN and equally distant from LINZMAN. His face is uplifted to the sky. He bursts into laughter, half defiant, half self-pitying, and takes the kitchen knife from under his coat.] Julie—

[The ring of farewell is in the word. He turns sideways, thrusts the knife deep in his breast, sways, falls and rolls down the far side of the embankment. There is a long pause. From the left, up on the embankment, come the TWO POLICEMEN.]

LINZMAN. What's the matter? [The FIRST POLICEMAN comes along the embankment as far as the steps, looks down on the opposite side, then

climbs down at about the spot where LILIOM disappeared. LINZMAN and the other POLICEMAN mount the embankment and look down on him.]
 Stabbed himself?

VOICE OF FIRST POLICEMAN. Yes, and he seems to have made a thorough job of it.

LINZMAN [*excitedly to the SECOND POLICEMAN*]. I'll go and telephone to the hospital.

[*He runs down the steps and exits at left.*]

SECOND POLICEMAN. Go to Eisler's grocery store and telephone to the factory from there. They've a doctor there, too. [*Calling down to the other POLICEMAN.*] I'm going to tie up the horses.

[*Comes down the steps and exits at left. The stage is empty. There is a pause. The little red signal lamp is lit.*]

VOICE OF FIRST POLICEMAN. Hey, Stephan!

VOICE OF SECOND POLICEMAN. What?

VOICE OF FIRST POLICEMAN. Shall I pull the knife out of his chest?

VOICE OF SECOND POLICEMAN. Better not, or he may bleed to death.

[*There is a pause.*]

VOICE OF FIRST POLICEMAN. Stephan!

VOICE OF SECOND POLICEMAN. Yes.

VOICE OF FIRST POLICEMAN. Lots of mosquitoes around here.

VOICE OF SECOND POLICEMAN. Yes.

VOICE OF FIRST POLICEMAN. Got a cigar?

VOICE OF SECOND POLICEMAN. No.

[*There is a pause. The FIRST POLICEMAN appears over the opposite side of the embankment.*]

FIRST POLICEMAN. A lot of good the new pay-schedule's done us—made things worse than they used to be—we get more but we have less than we ever had. If the Government could be made to realize that. It's a thankless job at best. You work hard year after year, you get gray in the service, and slowly you die—yes.

SECOND POLICEMAN. That's right.

FIRST POLICEMAN. Yes.

[*In the distance is heard the bell of the signal tower.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE FIVE

[*SCENE: The photographic "studio" a half hour later that same evening.*]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER, her son, MARIE and WOLF stand in a group back right, their heads together. JULIE stands apart from them, a few paces to the left.]

YOUNG HOLLUNDER [*who has just come in, tells his story excitedly*].

They're bringing him now. Two workmen from the factory are carrying him on a stretcher.

WOLF. Where is the doctor?

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. A policeman telephoned to headquarters. The police-surgeon ought to be here any minute.

MARIE. Maybe they'll pull him through after all.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. He stabbed

himself too deep in his chest. But he's still breathing. He can still talk, too, but very faintly. At first he lay there unconscious, but when they put him on the stretcher he came to.

WOLF. That was from the shaking.

MARIE. We'd better make room.

[They make room. Two workmen carry in LILIOM on a stretcher which has four legs and stands about as high as a bed. They put the stretcher at left directly in front of the sofa, so that the head is at right and the foot at left. Then they unobtrusively join the group at the door. Later, they go out. JULIE is standing at the side of the stretcher, where, without moving, she can see LILIOM's face. The others crowd emotionally together near the door. The FIRST POLICEMAN enters.]

FIRST POLICEMAN. Are you his wife?

JULIE. Yes.

FIRST POLICEMAN. The doctor at the factory who bandaged him up forbade us to take him to the hospital—dangerous to move him that far. What he needs now is rest. Just let him be until the police-surgeon comes. *[To the group near the door.]* He's not to be disturbed.

[They make way for him. He exits. There is a pause.]

WOLF *[gently urging the others out]*. Please—it's best if we all get out of here now. We'll only be in the way.

MARIE *[to JULIE]*. Julie, what do you think? *[JULIE looks at her without answering.]* Julie, can I do anything to help? *[JULIE does not*

answer.] We'll be just outside on the bench if you want us.

[MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son have gone out when first requested. Now MARIE and WOLF exit, too. JULIE sits on the edge of the stretcher and looks at LILIOM. He stretches his hand out to her. She clasps it. It is not quite dark yet. Both of them can still be plainly seen.]

LILIOM *[raises himself with difficulty; speaks lightly at first, but later soberly, defiantly]*. Little—Julie—there's something—I want to tell you—like when you go to a restaurant—and you've finished eating—and it's time—to pay—then you have to count up everything—everything you owe—well—I beat you—not because I was mad at you—no—only because I can't bear to see any one crying. You always cried—on my account—and, well, you see—I never learned a trade—what kind of a caretaker would I make? But anyhow—I wasn't going back to the carousel to fool with the girls. No, I spit on them all—understand?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. And—as for Hollinger—he's good enough—Mrs. Muskat can get along all right with him. The jokes he tells are mine—and the people laugh when he tells them—but I don't care—I didn't give you anything—no home—not even the food you ate—but you don't understand—It's true I'm not much good—but I couldn't be a caretaker—and so I thought maybe it would be better over there—in America—do you see?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. I'm not asking—forgive—

ness—I don't do that—I don't. Tell the baby—if you like.

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. Tell the baby—I wasn't much good—but tell him—if you ever talk about me—tell him—I thought—perhaps—over in America—but that's no affair of yours. I'm not asking forgiveness. For my part the police can come now— If it's a boy—if it's a girl— Perhaps I'll see the Lord God to-day— Do you think I'll see Him?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. I'm not afraid—of the police Up There—if they'll only let me come up in front of the Lord God Himself—not like down here where an officer stops you at the door. If the carpenter asks you—yes—be his wife—marry him. And the child—tell him he's his father—he'll believe you—won't he?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. When I beat you—I was right— You mustn't always think—you mustn't always be right—Liliom can be right once, too— It's all the same to me who was right— It's so dumb. Nobody's right—but they all think they are right— A lot they know!

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. Julie—come—hold my hand tight.

JULIE. I'm holding it tight—all the time.

LILIOM. Tighter, still tighter—I'm going— [*Pauses.*] Julie—

JULIE. Good-bye.

[*LILIOM sinks slowly back and dies. JULIE frees her hand.*

THE DOCTOR *enters with the* FIRST POLICEMAN.]

DOCTOR. Good evening. His wife?

JULIE. Yes, sir.

[*Behind the DOCTOR and POLICEMAN enter MARIE, WOLF, MOTHER HOLLUNDER, YOUNG HOLLUNDER and MRS. MUSKAT. They remain respectfully at the doorway. The DOCTOR bends over LILIOM and examines him.*]

DOCTOR. A light, if you please.

[*JULIE fetches a burning candle from the dark-room. The DOCTOR examines LILIOM briefly in the candle-light, then turns suddenly away.*]

Have you pen and ink?

WOLF [*proffering a pen*]. A fountain-pen—American—

DOCTOR [*takes a printed form from his pocket; speaks as he writes out the death certificate at the little table*]. My poor woman, your husband is dead—there's nothing to be done for him—the good God will help him now—I'll leave this certificate with you. You will give it to the people from the hospital when they come—I'll arrange for the body to be removed at once. [*Rises.*] Please give me a towel and soap.

POLICEMAN. I've got them for you out here, sir.

[*Points to door at back.*]

DOCTOR. God be with you, my good woman.

JULIE. Thank you, sir.

[*The DOCTOR and POLICEMAN exit. The others slowly draw nearer.*]

MARIE. Poor Julie. May he rest in peace, poor man, but as for you—please don't be angry with me for saying it—but you're better off this way.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He is better off, the poor fellow, and so are you.

MARIE. Much better, Julie . . . you are young . . . and one of these days some good man will come along. Am I right?

WOLF. She's right.

MARIE. Julie, tell me, am I right?

JULIE. You are right, dear; you are very good.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. There's a good man—the carpenter. Oh, I can speak of it now. He comes here every day on some excuse or other—and he never fails to ask for you.

MARIE. A widower—with two children.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He's better off, poor fellow—and so are you. He was a bad man.

MARIE. He wasn't good-hearted. Was he, Wolf?

WOLF. No, I must say, he really wasn't. No, Liliom wasn't a good man. A good man doesn't strike a woman.

MARIE. Am I right? Tell me, Julie, am I right?

JULIE. You are right, dear.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. It's really a good thing for her it happened.

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. He's better off—and so is she.

WOLF. Now you have your freedom again. How old are you?

JULIE. Eighteen.

WOLF. Eighteen. A mere child! Am I right?

JULIE. You are right, Wolf. You are kind.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. Lucky for you it happened, isn't it?

JULIE. Yes.

YOUNG HOLLUNDER. All you had before was bad luck. If it weren't for my mother you wouldn't have had a roof over your head or a bite to eat—and now autumn's coming

and winter. You couldn't have lived in this shack in the winter time, could you?

MARIE. Certainly not! You'd have frozen like the birds in the fields. Am I right, Julie?

JULIE. Yes, Marie.

MARIE. A year from now you will have forgotten all about him, won't you?

JULIE. You are right, Marie.

WOLF. If you need anything, count on us. We'll go now. But to-morrow morning we'll be back. Come, Marie. God be with you.

[Offers JULIE his hand.]

JULIE. God be with you.

MARIE [*embraces JULIE, weeping*]. It's the best thing that could have happened to you, Julie, the best thing.

JULIE. Don't cry, Marie.

[MARIE and WOLF exit.]

MOTHER HOLLUNDER. I'll make a little black coffee. You haven't had a thing to eat to-day. Then you'll come home with us.

[MOTHER HOLLUNDER and her son exit. MRS. MUSKAT comes over to JULIE.]

MRS. MUSKAT. Would you mind if I—looked at him?

JULIE. He used to work for you.

MRS. MUSKAT [*contemplates the body; turns to JULIE*]. Won't you make up with me?

JULIE. I wasn't angry with you.

MRS. MUSKAT. But you were. Let's make it up.

JULIE [*raising her voice eagerly, almost triumphantly*]. I've nothing to make up with you.

MRS. MUSKAT. But I have with you. Every one says hard things against the poor dead boy—except us two. You don't say he was bad.

JULIE [*raising her voice yet higher, this time on a defiant, wholly triumphant note*]. Yes, I do.

MRS. MUSKAT. I understand, my child. But he beat me, too. What does that matter? I've forgotten it.

JULIE [*from now on answers her coldly, dryly, without looking at her*]. That's your own affair.

MRS. MUSKAT. If I can help you in any way—

JULIE. There's nothing I need.

MRS. MUSKAT. I still owe him two kronen, back pay.

JULIE. You should have paid him.

MRS. MUSKAT. Now that the poor fellow is dead I thought perhaps it would be the same if I paid you.

JULIE. I've nothing to do with it.

MRS. MUSKAT. All right. Please don't think I'm trying to force myself on you. I stayed because we two are the only ones on earth who loved him. That's why I thought we ought to stick together.

JULIE. No, thank you.

MRS. MUSKAT. Then you couldn't have loved him as I did.

JULIE. No.

MRS. MUSKAT. I loved him better.

JULIE. Yes.

MRS. MUSKAT. Good-bye.

JULIE. Good-bye. [MRS. MUSKAT *exits*. JULIE *puts the candle on the table near LILIOM's head, sits on the edge of the stretcher, looks into the dead man's face and caresses it tenderly*.] Sleep, Liliom, sleep—it's no business of hers—I never even told you—but now I'll tell you—now I'll tell you—you bad, quick-tempered, rough, unhappy, wicked—*dear* boy—sleep peacefully, Liliom—they can't understand how I feel—I can't even explain to you—not even to you—how I feel—you'd only laugh at me—

but you can't hear me any more. [*Between tender motherliness and reproach, yet with great love in her voice*.] It was wicked of you to beat me—on the breast and on the head and face—but you're gone now—You treated me badly—that was wicked of you—but sleep peacefully, Liliom—you bad, bad boy, you—I love you—I never told you before—I was ashamed—but now I've told you—I love you. Liliom—sleep—my boy—sleep.

[*She rises, gets a Bible, sits down near the candle and reads softly to herself, so that, not the words, but an inarticulate murmur is heard. The CARPENTER enters at back*.]

CARPENTER [*stands near the door; in the dimness of the room he can scarcely be seen*]. Miss Julie—

JULIE [*without alarm*]. Who is that?

CARPENTER [*very slowly*]. The carpenter.

JULIE. What does the carpenter want?

CARPENTER. Can I be of help to you in any way? Shall I stay here with you?

JULIE [*gratefully, but firmly*]. Don't stay, carpenter.

CARPENTER. Shall I come back to-morrow?

JULIE. Not to-morrow, either.

CARPENTER. Don't be offended, Miss Julie, but I'd like to know—you see, I'm not a young man any more—I have two children—and if I'm to come back any more—I'd like to know—if there's any use—

JULIE. No use, carpenter.

CARPENTER [*as he exits*]. God be with you.

[JULIE *resumes her reading*.

FICSUR *enters, slinks furtively sideways to the stretcher, looks at LILIOM, shakes his head. JULIE looks up from her reading. FICSUR takes fright, slinks away from the stretcher, sits down at right, biting his nails. JULIE rises. FICSUR rises, too, and looks at her half fearfully. With her piercing glance upon him he slinks to the doorway at back, where he pauses and speaks.*

FICSUR. The old woman asked me to tell you that coffee is ready, and you are to come in.

[JULIE goes to the kitchen door.

FICSUR *withdraws until she has closed the door behind her. Then he reappears in the doorway, stands on tiptoes, looks at LILIOM, then exits. Now the body lies alone. After a brief silence music is heard, distant at first, but gradually coming nearer. It is very much like the music of the carousel, but slower, graver, more exalted. The melody, too, is the same, yet the tempo is altered and contrapuntal measures of the thieves' song are intertwined in it. Two men in black, with heavy sticks, soft black hats and black gloves, appear in the doorway at back and stride slowly into the room. Their faces are beardless, marble white, grave and benign. One stops in front of the stretcher, the other a pace to the right. From above a dim violet light illuminates their faces.*

THE FIRST [to LILIOM]. Rise and come with us.

THE SECOND [*politely*]. You're under arrest.

THE FIRST [*somewhat louder, but always in a gentle, low, resonant voice*]. Do you hear? Rise. Don't you hear?

THE SECOND. We are the police.

THE FIRST [*bends down, touches LILIOM's shoulder*]. Get up and come with us.

[LILIOM *slowly sits up.*]

THE SECOND. Come along.

THE FIRST [*paternally*]. These people suppose that when they die all their difficulties are solved for them.

THE SECOND [*raising his voice sternly*]. That simply by thrusting a knife in your heart and making it stop beating you can leave your wife behind with a child in her womb—

THE FIRST. It is not as simple as that.

THE SECOND. Such things are not settled so easily.

THE FIRST. Come along. You will have to give an account of yourself. [*As both bow their heads, he continues softly.*] We are God's police. [*An expression of glad relief lights up LILIOM's face. He rises from the stretcher.*] Come.

THE SECOND. You mortals don't get off quite as easy as that.

THE FIRST [*softly*]. Come. [LILIOM *starts to walk ahead of them, then stops and looks at them.*] The end is not as abrupt as that. Your name is still spoken. Your face is still remembered. And what you said, and what you did, and what you failed to do—these are still remembered. Remembered, too, are the manner of your glance, the ring of your voice, the clasp of your hand and how your step

sounded—as long as one is left who remembers you, so long is the matter unended. Before the end there is much to be undone. Until you are quite forgotten, my son, you will not be finished with the earth—even though you are dead.

THE SECOND [*very gently*]. Come.

[*The music begins again. All three exit at back, LILIOM leading, the others following. The stage is empty and quite dark save for the candle which burns*

by the stretcher, on which, in the shadows, the covers are so arranged that one cannot quite be sure that a body is not still lying. The music dies out in the distance as if it had followed LILIOM and the two POLICEMEN. The candle flickers and goes out. There is a brief interval of silence and total darkness before]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

BURLINGAME

PUBLIC

SCENE SIX

[*SCENE: In the Beyond. A white-washed courtroom. There is a green-topped table; behind it a bench. Back center is a door with a bell over it. Next to this door is a window through which can be seen a vista of rose-tinted clouds.*

Down right there is a grated iron door. Down left another door.

Two men are on the bench when the curtain rises. One is richly, the other poorly, dressed.

From a great distance is heard a fanfare of trumpets playing the refrain of the thieves' song in slow, altered tempo.

Passing the window at back appear LILIOM and the two policemen.

The bell rings.

An old guard enters at right. He is bald and has a long white beard. He wears the conventional police uniform.

He goes to the door at back, opens it, exchanges silent greetings with the two policemen, closes the door again.

LILIOM looks wonderingly around.

THE FIRST [*to the old guard*]. Announce us.

[*The guard exits at left.*] ^{LIE.}

LILIOM. Is this it?

THE SECOND. Yes, my son.

LILIOM. This is the police court?

THE SECOND. Yes, my son. The part for suicide cases.

LILIOM. And what happens here?

THE FIRST. Here justice is done. Sit down.

[*LILIOM sits next to the two men.*

The two policemen stand silent near the table.]

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN [*whispers*]. Suicide, too?

LILIOM. Yes.

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN [*points to the POORLY DRESSED MAN*]. So's he. [*Introduces himself.*] My name is Reich.

THE POORLY DRESSED MAN [*whispers, too*]. My name is Stephen Kadar.

[*LILIOM only looks at them.*]

THE POORLY DRESSED MAN. And you? What's your name?

LILIOM. None of your business.

[*Both move a bit away from him.*]

THE POORLY DRESSED MAN. I did it by jumping out of a window.

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. I did it with a pistol— And you?

LILIOM. With a knife.

[*They move a bit further away from him.*]

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. A pistol is cleaner.

LILIOM. If I had the price of a pistol—

THE SECOND. Silence!

[THE POLICE MAGISTRATE enters.

He has a long white beard, is bald, but in profile there can be seen on his head a single tuft of snow-white hair. The GUARD reënters behind him and sits on the bench with the dead men. As the MAGISTRATE enters, all rise, except LILIOM, who remains surlily seated. When the MAGISTRATE sits down, so do the others.]

THE GUARD. Yesterday's cases, Your Honor. The numbers are entered in the docket.

THE MAGISTRATE. Number 16,472.

THE FIRST [*looks in his notebook, beckons the RICHLY DRESSED MAN*]. Stand up, please.

[THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN rises.]

THE MAGISTRATE. Your name?

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. Doctor Reich.

THE MAGISTRATE. Age?

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. Forty-two, married, Jew.

THE MAGISTRATE [*with a gesture of dismissal*]. Religion does not interest us here— Why did you kill yourself?

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. On account of debts.

THE MAGISTRATE. What good did you do on earth?

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. I was a lawyer—

THE MAGISTRATE [*coughs significantly*]. Yes—we'll discuss that later. For the present I shall only ask you: Would you like to go back to earth once more before sunrise? I advise you that you have the right to go if you choose. Do you understand?

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. Yes, sir.

THE MAGISTRATE. He who takes his life is apt, in his haste and his excitement, to forget something. Is there anything important down there you have left undone? Something to tell some one? Something to undo?

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. My debts—

THE MAGISTRATE. They do not matter here. Here we are concerned only with the affairs of the soul.

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN. Then—if you please—when I left—the house—my youngest son, Oscar—was asleep. I didn't trust myself to wake him—and bid him good-bye. I would have liked—to kiss him good-bye.

THE MAGISTRATE [*to the SECOND*]. You will take Dr. Reich back and let him kiss his son Oscar.

THE SECOND. Come with me, please.

THE RICHLY DRESSED MAN [*to the MAGISTRATE*]. I thank you.

[*He bows and exits at back with the SECOND.*]

THE MAGISTRATE [*after making an entry in the docket*]. Number 16,473.

THE FIRST [*looks in his notebook, then beckons LILIOM*]. Stand up.

LILIOM. You said *please* to him.

[*He rises.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Your name?

LILIOM. Liliom.

THE MAGISTRATE. Isn't that your nickname?

LILIOM. Yes.

THE MAGISTRATE. What is your right name?

LILIOM. Andreas.

THE MAGISTRATE. And your last name?

LILIOM. Zavoczki—after my mother.

THE MAGISTRATE. Your age?

LILIOM. Twenty-four.

THE MAGISTRATE. What good did you do on earth? [LILIOM is silent.] Why did you take your life? [LILIOM does not answer. THE MAGISTRATE addresses THE FIRST]. Take that knife away from him. [THE FIRST does so.] It will be returned to you, if you go back to earth.

LILIOM. Do I go back to earth again?

THE MAGISTRATE. Just answer my questions.

LILIOM. I wasn't answering then, I was asking if—

THE MAGISTRATE. You don't ask questions here. You only answer. Only answer, Andreas Zavoczki! I ask you whether there is anything on earth you neglected to accomplish. Anything down there you would like to do?

LILIOM. Yes.

THE MAGISTRATE. What is it?

LILIOM. I'd like to break Ficsur's head for him.

THE MAGISTRATE. Punishment is our office. Is there nothing else on earth you'd like to do?

LILIOM. I don't know—I guess, as long as I'm here, I'll not go back.

THE MAGISTRATE [to THE FIRST]. Note that. He waives his right. [LILIOM starts back to the bench]. Stay where you are. You are aware

that you left your wife without food or shelter?

LILIOM. Yes.

THE MAGISTRATE. Don't you regret it?

LILIOM. No.

THE MAGISTRATE. You are aware that your wife is pregnant, and that in six months a child will be born?

LILIOM. I know.

THE MAGISTRATE. And that the child, too, will be without food or shelter? Do you regret that?

LILIOM. As long as I won't be there, what's it got to do with me?

THE MAGISTRATE. Don't try to deceive us, Andreas Zavoczki. We see through you as through a pane of glass.

LILIOM. If you see so much, what do you want to ask me for? Why don't you let me rest—in peace?

THE MAGISTRATE. First you must earn your rest.

LILIOM. I want—only—to sleep.

THE MAGISTRATE. Your obstinacy won't help you. Here patience is endless as time. We can wait.

LILIOM. Can I ask something—I'd like to know—if Your Honor will tell me—whether the baby will be a boy or a girl.

THE MAGISTRATE. You shall see that for yourself.

LILIOM [excitedly]. I'll see the baby?

THE MAGISTRATE. When you do it won't be a baby any more. But we haven't reached that question yet.

LILIOM. I'll see it?

THE MAGISTRATE. Again I ask you: Do you not regret that you deserted your wife and child; that you were a bad husband, a bad father?

LILIOM. A bad husband?

THE MAGISTRATE. Yes.

LILIOM. And a bad father?

THE MAGISTRATE. That, too.

LILIOM. I couldn't get work—and I couldn't bear to see Julie—all the time—all the time—

THE MAGISTRATE. Weeping! Why are you ashamed to say it? You couldn't bear to see her weeping. Why are you afraid of that word? And why are you ashamed that you loved her?

LILIOM [*shrugs his shoulders*]. Who's ashamed? But I couldn't bear to see her—and that's why I was bad to her. You see, it wouldn't do to go back to the carousel—and Ficsur came along with his talk about—that other thing—and all of a sudden it happened, I don't know how. The police and the Jew with the pistol—and there I stood—and I'd lost the money playing cards—and I didn't want to be put in prison. [*Demanding justification.*] Maybe I was wrong not to go out and steal when there was nothing to eat in the house? Should I have gone out to steal for Julie?

THE MAGISTRATE [*emphatically*]. Yes.

LILIOM [*astounded, after a pause*]. The police down there never said that.

THE MAGISTRATE. You beat that poor, frail girl; you beat her because she loved you. How could you do that?

LILIOM. We argued with each other—she said this and I said that—and because she was right I couldn't answer her—and I got mad—and the anger rose up in me—until it reached here [*Points to his throat.*] and then I beat her.

THE MAGISTRATE. Are you sorry?

LILIOM [*shakes his head, but can-*

not utter the word "no"; continues softly]. When I touched her slender throat—then—if you like—you might say—

[*Falters, looks embarrassed at*
THE MAGISTRATE.]

THE MAGISTRATE [*confidently expectant.*] Are you sorry?

LILIOM [*with a stare*]. I'm not sorry for anything.

THE MAGISTRATE. Liliom, Liliom, it will be difficult to help you.

LILIOM. I'm not asking any help.

THE MAGISTRATE. You were offered employment as a caretaker on Arader Street. [*To THE FIRST.*] Where is that entered?

THE FIRST. In the small docket.

[*Hands him the open book.*

THE MAGISTRATE *looks in it.*]

THE MAGISTRATE. Rooms, kitchen, quarterly wages, the privilege of keeping poultry. Why didn't you accept it?

LILIOM. I'm not a caretaker. I'm no good at caretaking. To be a caretaker—you have to be a caretaker—

THE MAGISTRATE. If I said to you now: Liliom, go back on your stretcher. To-morrow morning you will arise alive and well again. Would you be a caretaker then?

LILIOM. No.

THE MAGISTRATE. Why not?

LILIOM. Because—because that's just why I died.

THE MAGISTRATE. That is not true, my son. You died because you loved little Julie and the child she is bearing under her heart.

LILIOM. No.

THE MAGISTRATE. Look me in the eye.

LILIOM [*looks him in the eye*]. No.

THE MAGISTRATE [*stroking his*

beard]. Liliom, Liliom, if it were not for our Heavenly patience— Go back to your seat. Number 16,474.

THE FIRST [*looks in his notebook*]. Stephan Kadar.

[THE POORLY DRESSED MAN rises.]

THE MAGISTRATE. You came out to-day?

THE POORLY DRESSED MAN. To-day.

THE MAGISTRATE [*indicating the crimson sea of clouds*]. How long were you in there?

THE POORLY DRESSED MAN. Thirteen years.

THE MAGISTRATE. Officer, you went to earth with him?

THE FIRST. Yes, sir.

THE MAGISTRATE. Stephan Kadar, after thirteen years of purification by fire you returned to earth to give proof that your soul had been burned clean. What good deed did you perform?

THE POORLY DRESSED MAN. When I came to the village and looked in the window of our cottage I saw my poor little orphans sleeping peacefully. But it was raining and the rain beat into the room through a hole in the roof. So I went and fixed the roof so it wouldn't rain in any more. My hammering woke them up and they were afraid. But their mother came in to them and comforted them. She said to them: "Don't cry! It's your poor, dear father hammering up there. He's come back from the other world to fix the roof for us."

THE MAGISTRATE. Officer?

THE FIRST. That's what happened.

THE MAGISTRATE. Stephan Kadar, you have done a good deed. What you did will be written in books to

gladden the hearts of children who read them. [*Indicates the door at left.*] The door is open to you. The eternal light awaits you. [THE FIRST escorts the POORLY DRESSED MAN out at left with great deference.] Liliom! [LILIOM rises.] You have heard?

LILIOM. Yes.

THE MAGISTRATE. When this man first appeared before us he was as stubborn as you. But now he has purified himself and withstood the test. He has done a good deed.

LILIOM. What's he done, anyhow? Any roofer can fix a roof. It's much harder to be a barker in an amusement park.

THE MAGISTRATE. Liliom, you shall remain for sixteen years in the crimson fire until your child is full grown. By that time your pride and your stubbornness will have been burnt out of you. And when your daughter—

LILIOM. My daughter!

THE MAGISTRATE. When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen—

[LILIOM bows his head, covers his eyes with his hands, and to keep from weeping laughs defiantly, sadly.]

THE MAGISTRATE. When your daughter has reached the age of sixteen you will be sent back to earth for one day.

LILIOM. Me?

THE MAGISTRATE. Yes—just as you may have read in the legends of how the dead reappear on earth for a time.

LILIOM. I never believed them.

THE MAGISTRATE. Now you see they are true. You will go back to earth one day to show how far the purification of your soul has progressed.

LILIOM. Then I must show what I can do—like when you apply for a job—as a coachman?

THE MAGISTRATE. Yes—it is a test.

LILIOM. And will I be told what I have to do?

THE MAGISTRATE. No.

LILIOM. How will I know, then?

THE MAGISTRATE. You must decide that for yourself. That's what you burn sixteen years for. And if you do something good, something splendid for your child, then—

LILIOM [*laughs sadly*]. Then? [*All stand up and bow their heads reverently. There is a pause.*] Then?

THE MAGISTRATE. Now I'll bid you farewell, Liliom. Sixteen years and a day shall pass before I see you again. When you have returned from earth you will come up before me again. Take heed and think well of some good deed to do for your child. On that will depend which door shall be opened to you up here. Now go, Liliom.

[*He exits at left.* THE GUARD stands at attention. *There is a pause.*]

THE FIRST [*approaches LILIOM*]. Come along, my son.

[*He goes to the door at right; pulls open the bolt and waits.*]

LILIOM [*to the old GUARD, softly*]. Say, officer.

THE GUARD. What do you want?

LILIOM. Please—can I get—have you got—?

THE GUARD. What?

LILIOM [*whispers*]. A cigarette?

[*The old GUARD stares at him, goes a few paces to the left, shakes his head disapprovingly. Then his expression softens. He takes a cigarette from his pocket and, crossing to LILIOM—who has gone over to the door at right—gives him the cigarette. THE FIRST throws open the door. An intense rose-colored light streams in. The glow of it is so strong that it blinds LILIOM and he takes a step backward and bows his head and covers his eyes with his hand before he steps forward into the light.*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

SCENE SEVEN

[SCENE: *Sixteen years later. A small, tumble-down house on a bare, unclosed plot of ground. Before the house is a tiny garden enclosed by a hip-high hedge.*

At back a wooden fence crosses the stage; in the center of it is a door large enough to admit a wagon. Beyond the fence is a view of a suburban street which blends into a broad vista of tilled fields.

It is a bright Sunday in spring.

In the garden, a table for two is laid.]

JULIE, her daughter LOUISE, WOLF and MARIE are discovered in the garden. WOLF is prosperously dressed, MARIE somewhat elaborately, with a huge hat.

JULIE. You could stay for lunch.

MARIE. Impossible, dear. Since he became the proprietor of the Café Sorrento, Wolf simply has to be there all the time.

JULIE. But you needn't stay there all day, too.

MARIE. Oh, yes. I sit near the cashier's cage, read the papers, keep an eye on the waiters and drink in the bustle and excitement of the great city.

JULIE. And what about the children.

MARIE. You know what modern families are like. Parents scarcely ever see their children these days. The four girls are with their governess, the three boys with their tutor.

LOUISE. Auntie, dear, do stay and eat with us.

MARIE [*importantly*]. Impossible to-day, dear child, impossible. Perhaps some other time. Come, Mr. Beifeld.

JULIE. Since when do you call your husband mister?

WOLF. I'd rather she did, dear lady. When we used to be very familiar we quarreled all the time. Now we are formal with each other and get along like society folk. I kiss your hand, dear lady.

JULIE. Good-bye, Wolf.

MARIE. Adieu, my dear. [*They embrace.*] Adieu, my dear child.

LOUISE. Good-bye, Aunt Marie. Good-bye, Uncle Wolf.

[*WOLF and MARIE exit.*]

JULIE. You can get the soup now, Louise, dear.

[*LOUISE goes into the house and reënters with the soup. They sit at the table.*]

LOUISE. Mother, is it true we're not going to work at the jute factory any more?

JULIE. Yes, dear.

LOUISE. Where then?

JULIE. Uncle Wolf has gotten us a place in a big establishment where

they make all kinds of fittings for cafés. We're to make big curtains, you know, the kind they hang in the windows, with lettering on them.

LOUISE. It'll be nicer there than at the jute factory.

JULIE. Yes, dear. The work isn't as dirty and pays better, too. A poor widow like your mother is lucky to get it.

[*They eat. LILIOM and the two HEAVENLY POLICEMEN appear in the big doorway at back. The POLICEMEN pass slowly by. LILIOM stands there alone a moment, then comes slowly down and pauses at the opening of the hedge. He is dressed as he was on the day of his death. He is very pale, but otherwise unaltered. JULIE, at the table, has her back to him. LOUISE sits facing the audience.*]

LILIOM. Good day.

LOUISE. Good day.

JULIE. Another beggar! What is it you want, my poor man?

LILIOM. Nothing.

JULIE. We have no money to give, but if you care for a plate of soup— [*LOUISE goes into the house.*] Have you come far to-day?

LILIOM. Yes—very far.

JULIE. Are you tired?

LILIOM. Very tired.

JULIE. Over there at the gate is a stone. Sit down and rest. My daughter is bringing you the soup.

[*LOUISE comes out of the house.*]

LILIOM. Is that your daughter?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM [*to Louise*]. You are the daughter?

LOUISE. Yes, sir.

LILIOM. A fine, healthy girl.

[*Takes the soup plate from her with one hand, while with the other he touches her arm.*

LOUISE *draws back quickly.*]

LOUISE [*crosses to JULIE*]. Mother!

JULIE. What, my child?

LOUISE. The man tried to take me by the arm.

JULIE. Nonsense! You only imagined it, dear. The poor, hungry man has other things to think about than fooling with young girls. Sit down and eat your soup.

[*They eat.*]

LILIOM [*eats, too, but keeps looking at them*]. You work at the factory, eh?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. Your daughter, too?

LOUISE. Yes.

LILIOM. And your husband?

JULIE [*after a pause*]. I have no husband. I'm a widow.

LILIOM. A widow?

JULIE. Yes.

LILIOM. Your husband—I suppose he's been dead a long time. [*JULIE does not answer.*] I say—has your husband been dead a long time?

JULIE. A long time.

LILIOM. What did he die of?

[*JULIE is silent.*]

LOUISE. No one knows. He went to America to work and he died there—in the hospital. Poor father, I never knew him.

LILIOM. He went to America?

LOUISE. Yes, before I was born.

LILIOM. To America?

JULIE. Why do you ask so many questions? Did you know him, perhaps?

LILIOM [*puts the plate down*]. Heaven knows! I've known so many people. Maybe I knew him, too.

JULIE. Well, if you knew him, leave him and us in peace with your questions. He went to America and died there. That's all there is to tell.

LILIOM. All right. All right. Don't be angry with me. I didn't mean any harm.

[*There is a pause.*]

LOUISE. My father was a very handsome man.

JULIE. Don't talk so much.

LOUISE. Did I say anything—?

LILIOM. Surely the little orphan can say that about her father.

LOUISE. My father could juggle so beautifully with three ivory balls that people used to advise him to go on the stage.

JULIE. Who told you that?

LOUISE. Uncle Wolf.

LILIOM. Who is that?

LOUISE. Mr. Wolf Beifeld, who owns the Café Sorrento.

LILIOM. The one who used to be a porter?

JULIE [*astonished*]. Do you know him, too? It seems that you know all Budapest.

LILIOM. Wolf Beifeld is a long way from being all Budapest. But I do know a lot of people. Why shouldn't I know Wolf Beifeld?

LOUISE. He was a friend of my father.

JULIE. He was not his friend. No one was.

LILIOM. You speak of your husband so sternly.

JULIE. What's that to you? Doesn't it suit you? I can speak of my husband any way I like. It's nobody's business but mine.

LILIOM. Certainly, certainly—it's your own business.

[*Takes up his soup plate again.
All three eat.*]

LOUISE [*to JULIE*]. Perhaps he knew father, too.

JULIE. Ask him, if you like.

LOUISE [*crosses to LILIAM. He stands up*]. Did you know my father? [LILIAM *nods*. LOUISE *addresses her mother*.] Yes, he knew him.

JULIE [*rises*]. You knew Andreas Zavoczki?

LILIAM. Liliom? Yes.

LOUISE. Was he really a very handsome man?

LILIAM. I wouldn't exactly say handsome.

LOUISE [*confidently*]. But he was an awfully good man, wasn't he?

LILIAM. He wasn't so good, either. As far as I know he was what they called a clown, a barker in a carousel.

LOUISE [*pleased*]. Did he tell funny jokes?

LILIAM. Lots of 'em. And he sang funny songs, too.

LOUISE. In the carousel?

LILIAM. Yes— But he was something of a bully, too. He'd fight any one. He even hit your dear little mother.

JULIE. That's a lie.

LILIAM. It's true.

JULIE. Aren't you ashamed to tell the child such awful things about her father? Get out of here, you shameless liar. Eats our soup and our bread and has the impudence to slander our dead!

LILIAM. I didn't mean—I—

JULIE. What right have you to tell lies to the child? Take that plate, Louise, and let him be on his way. If he wasn't such a hungry-looking beggar, I'd put him out myself.

[LOUISE *takes the plate out of his hand*.]

LILIAM. So he didn't hit you?

JULIE. No, never. He was always good to me.

LOUISE [*whispers*]. Did he tell funny stories, too?

LILIAM. Yes, and *such* funny ones.

JULIE. Don't speak to him any more. In God's name, go.

LOUISE. In God's name.

[JULIE *resumes her seat at the table and eats*.]

LILIAM. If you please, Miss—I have a pack of cards in my pocket. And if you like, I'll show you some tricks that'll make you split your sides laughing. [LOUISE *holds LILIAM's plate in her left hand. With her right she reaches out and holds the garden gate shut*.] Let me in, just a little way, Miss, and I'll do the tricks for you.

LOUISE. Go, in God's name, and let us be. Why are you making those ugly faces?

LILIAM. Don't chase me away, Miss; let me come in for just a minute—just for a minute—just long enough to let me show you something pretty, something wonderful. [Opens the gate.] Miss, I've something to give you.

[*Takes from his pocket a big red handkerchief in which is wrapped a glittering star from Heaven. He looks furtively about him to make sure that the POLICE are not watching*.]

LOUISE. What's that?

LILIAM. Pst! A star!

[*With a gesture he indicates that he has stolen it out of the sky*.]

JULIE [*sternly*]. Don't take any-

thing from him. He's probably stolen it somewhere. [*To LILIOM.*] In God's name, be off with you.

LOUISE. Yes, be off with you. Be off.

[*She slams the gate.*]

LILIOM. Miss—please, Miss—I've got to do something good—or—do something good—a good deed—

LOUISE [*pointing with her right hand*]. That's the way out.

LILIOM. Miss—

LOUISE. Get out!

LILIOM. Miss!

[*Looks up at her suddenly and slaps her extended hand, so that the slap resounds loudly.*]

LOUISE. Mother!

[*Looks dazedly at LILIOM, who bows his head dismayed, forlorn. JULIE rises and looks at LILIOM in astonishment. There is a long pause.*]

JULIE [*comes over to them slowly*]. What's the matter here?

LOUISE [*bewildered, does not take her eyes off LILIOM*]. Mother—the man—he hit me—on the hand—hard—I heard the sound of it—but it didn't hurt—mother—it didn't hurt—it was like a caress—as if he had just touched my hand tenderly.

[*She hides behind JULIE. LILIOM sulkily raises his head and looks at JULIE.*]

JULIE [*softly*]. Go, my child. Go into the house. Go.

LOUISE [*going*]. But, mother—I'm afraid—it sounded so loud— [*Weeping.*] And it didn't hurt at all—just as if he'd—kissed my hand instead— Mother!

[*She hides her face.*]

JULIE. Go in, my child, go in.

[*LOUISE goes slowly into the house. JULIE watches her until*

she has disappeared, then turns slowly to LILIOM.]

JULIE. You struck my child.

LILIOM. Yes—I struck her.

JULIE. Is that what you came for, to strike my child?

LILIOM. No—I didn't come for that—but I did strike her—and now I'm going back.

JULIE. In the name of the Lord Jesus, who are you?

LILIOM [*simply*]. A poor, tired beggar who came a long way and who was hungry. And I took your soup and bread and I struck your child. Are you angry with me?

JULIE [*her hand on her heart; fearfully, wonderingly*]. Jesus protect me—I don't understand it—I'm not angry—not angry at all—

[*LILIOM goes to the doorway and leans against the doorpost, his back to the audience. JULIE goes to the table and sits.*]

JULIE. Louise! [*LOUISE comes out of the house.*] Sit down, dear, we'll finish eating.

LOUISE. Has he gone?

JULIE. Yes. [*They are both seated at the table. LOUISE, her head in her hands, is staring into space.*] Why don't you eat, dear?

LOUISE. What has happened, mother?

JULIE. Nothing, my child.

[*The HEAVENLY POLICEMEN appear outside. LILIOM walks slowly off at left. The FIRST POLICEMAN makes a deploring gesture. Both shake their heads deploringly and follow LILIOM slowly off at left.*]

LOUISE. Mother, dear, why won't you tell me?

JULIE. What is there to tell you,

child? Nothing has happened. We were peacefully eating, and a beggar came who talked of bygone days, and then I thought of your father.

LOUISE. My father?

JULIE. Your father—Liliom.

[There is a pause.]

LOUISE. Mother—tell me—has it ever happened to you—has any one ever hit you—without hurting you in the least?

JULIE. Yes, my child. It has happened to me, too.

[There is a pause.]

LOUISE. Is it possible for some one to hit you—hard like that—real loud and hard—and not hurt you at all?

JULIE. It is possible, dear—that some one may beat you and beat you and beat you—and not hurt you at all—

[There is a pause. Nearby an organ-grinder has stopped. The music of his organ begins.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE GUARDSMAN

Translated by

GRACE I. COLBRON AND HANS BARTSCH

Acting Version by
PHILIP MOELLER

First produced in America as "The Guardsman" by
The Theatre Guild
October 13, 1924

CHARACTERS

THE ACTOR
THE ACTRESS, *his wife*
THE CRITIC, *Dr. Bernhard*
"MAMA"
LIESL
A CREDITOR
AN USHER AT THE THEATRE

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

SCENES

- ACT I. *Living room in the Actor's home. Afternoon.*
ACT II. *An Opera Box. That evening.*
ACT III. *Living room in the Actor's home. The following afternoon.*

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *The living room of the Actor and his wife, the Actress, MARIE. Both are popular Viennese stage favorites. Their living room is old and large with a kind of stale elegance. Souvenirs, wreaths, lettered ribbons, handsome showy furniture crowd the room. It is a late afternoon in spring, gradually growing dark as the act progresses.*

Up center is a large window; before it to the stage left of it is a grand

piano crowded with flowers, papers, music, novels, candy boxes, and a lamp.

In front of the piano is a sofa. A half-round table is at the left end of the sofa. An armchair stands left by the fireplace, and there is a settee right.

There are entrances at the upstage corner, left, and up and down stage, right. The upstage right entrance leads by two on stage steps to the

outside door of the apartment. The down stage right entrance is to the kitchen and the upstage left entrance to the Actress's boudoir and the other rooms of the apartment.

AT RISE: *The ACTOR sits on settee, right. The CRITIC is in the armchair, left, reading a newspaper. The ACTRESS is sitting at the piano playing Chopin's Nocturne in E flat, op. 9, no. 2. MAMA and LIESL, the maid, are packing costumes into an old-fashioned leather trunk right center. There is a confusion of voices throughout the room.*]

MAMA [*to LIESL*]. I've been on my knees for the last half hour and he hasn't yet told me if he wants the Princivalli costumes.

LIESL. Well, I wish you'd hurry up and ask him— I'm getting housemaid's knee—listening to this scrap.

MAMA [*to ACTOR*]. You don't need the Princivalli costumes?

ACTOR. No, I don't need the Princivalli costumes.

MAMA. You don't play "Monna Vanna"?

ACTOR [*nervous*]. No, I don't play "Monna Vanna." Haven't I just told you that I don't need the Princivalli costumes?

MAMA. Oh, all right . . . all right . . . all right.

ACTRESS [*still playing*]. All right, all right, all right. Will you two ever stop quarreling?

ACTOR. Every damn time I go on tour this same thing happens.

CRITIC. Oh, my dear children, for heaven's sake. . . . Why do you—

ACTOR. Mama has more sense than all these of us put together, but she pretends to be a driveling idiot, just to make me nervous.

MAMA. Make you nervous? Well, why don't you hit me? . . . why don't you?

ACTRESS. Oh, Mama . . . Mama.

CRITIC. Mama!

ACTOR. Why does she annoy me like this? Why does she tell me to hit her? It's just to make me more nervous than I am.

[MAMA, LIESL, CRITIC, and ACTOR, are all talking.]

ACTRESS [*interrupting*]. Mama, I have just one thing to say to you! Mama . . . you'll end by making me nervous, too. Will you listen to me— Then I'll—I'll throw you out.

[*Silence.*]

MAMA [*gets up and goes sadly to CRITIC*]. A nice way to talk to a mother! A nice way to talk to a mother!

ACTRESS. I've been talking to you that way for nine years. . . . And you're just beginning to get excited over it now?

CRITIC. Nine years already?

ACTRESS. She's been cook for two years for twenty gulden a month. She's been mama when I need her for seven. For that she gets fifty.

MAMA. I'll not be here seven years more—that's one sure thing.

ACTOR. Don't frighten me so—the very thought breaks my heart.

LIESL [*to ACTOR*]. Is there anything else, sir?

ACTOR. No, get my bags.

[LIESL exits left.]

MAMA. Now you see the way he talks to me, dearie.

ACTOR. Haven't I told you at least a thousand times, not to be so familiar with my wife!

MAMA. Not even that? . . . Oh, I know you don't like me. It's six months now since you and Marie

were married and all that time I've treated you like my own son. [*To CRITIC.*] I—I can't stand it any longer. [*Sits sofa.*] I can't stand it any longer.

CRITIC [*behind newspaper*]. I've always told you . . . it's bad enough being the mother of an actress even when you've brought her into the world—but it's much worse when she's been handed you ready-made.

MAMA. I know you, my friend, and I know exactly why *you* don't like me. But at least you have your reasons.

ACTOR [*rises in rage*]. Mama!

MAMA. Oh, very well.

[*She rises, bangs the trunk lid down and goes out left, slamming the door behind her. Pause.*]

LIESL [*reënters with grips*]. Here are your bags, sir.

[*She hands the trunk keys to the*

ACTOR.]

ACTOR. Have the men take them downstairs.

LIESL. Yes, sir.

[*Off with the grips.*]

CRITIC. How long is this engagement for?

ACTOR. Three nights. I play "Romeo," "Hamlet," and "Fire in the Opera House."

ACTRESS. Then you'll be home again by Friday?

ACTOR. Friday.

[*Kicks trunk.*]

ACTRESS. You're nervous.

ACTOR. I am nervous.

[*Kicks trunk.*]

ACTRESS. You are just a little—unendurable.

ACTOR. I am just a little—unendurable.

ACTRESS. In that case it's wisest to leave you entirely alone.

ACTOR. It's wisest to leave me entirely alone.

CRITIC. Hm.

ACTRESS. So it goes.

[*Crosses left.*]

ACTOR. So it goes.

CRITIC. Good God! What would our so-called "dear public" think if it should hear its two popular favorites talking to one another like this?

ACTRESS. I talk sweetly enough to him on the stage—but at home—

[*The CONCIERGE and LIESL enter for the trunk. Until they go out the quarrel between ACTOR and ACTRESS discontinues.*]

ACTOR. I wish you'd show me less sweetness in the theatre and more at home.

ACTRESS. I show you all the sweetness you deserve.

ACTOR. And who's to judge what I deserve?

ACTRESS. I'm a judge of what you deserve from me.

ACTOR. That's the way she talks to me.

CRITIC. Well, look at the way you talk to her.

ACTOR. Yes, yes.

ACTRESS. Day in, day out.

[*She goes up left.*]

ACTOR [*walking right*]. Only six months married—and we've come to this!

CRITIC. Whose fault is it? Yours, yours only. I haven't left her side for eight years and she's sweeter to me than ever.

ACTOR. It's easy for you—she doesn't love *you*—

ACTRESS. Oh, well—if you're talking of love—

ACTOR. I know—I know. You don't love me! Say it, sweetheart—you haven't said it to-day yet. Tell me that you no longer love me—keep on saying it—let me get used to it. I knew your love never lasted very long but I confess I scarcely looked for the end before September. [*Crosses right.*] And now it's only May.

ACTRESS [*looking out of the window*]. May—

CRITIC. Beautiful spring— Beautiful May!

ACTRESS. A beautiful May—

ACTOR [*goes to right of her*]. What are you crying about?

ACTRESS. I am not crying.

ACTOR. Then why do you pretend to be crying?

ACTRESS. It's a feeling that comes over me sometimes.

ACTOR. I know what you're crying about—I'm afraid I know.

ACTRESS. If you know—why do you ask?

ACTOR [*crosses right, and walks up and down*]. Let us separate then—let us get a divorce—let us confess honestly that this is the end. You go one way, I'll go another. You will have your consolations, I'll have mine. That will be better than this sort of thing—these everlasting lies, these hidden tears, these threatening eyes, this sulking in your corner, this—this Chopin music—this—

LIESL [*enters right and interrupts him*]. There's a man outside.

ACTOR. What does he want?

LIESL. I don't know, but he's got a bill.

ACTOR. Show him in.

LIESL. Come in.

CREDITOR. Good afternoon. Good afternoon.

ACTOR [*very amiably*]. Well, well, my friend. What can I do for you?

CREDITOR [*looks slyly at CRITIC*]. What can he do for me? You know I hate to disturb a great artist like yourself, but if you could let me have just a little bit on account. The whole thing is only four hundred and sixty kronen. I tell you, Weinlovitz is in a temper. The whole day I been calling on actors and—

ACTOR [*to the CRITIC*]. What are they playing at the theatre to-night?

CRITIC. "Midsummer Night's Dream."

ACTOR [*to CREDITOR*]. Have you ever seen "Midsummer Night's Dream"?

CREDITOR. Have I ever seen "Midsummer Night's Dream"? Isn't Mr. Krauss in that show? Doesn't he owe me six hundred kronen? You know just as well as I do that Krauss plays Oberon.

ACTOR. Yes, I know. He's very bad.

CREDITOR. Well, I don't know. You know when it comes to acting some like this and some like that and after all who knows—

ACTOR. What is the bill for to-morrow night?

CRITIC. "Salomé."

ACTOR. Have you seen "Salomé"?

CREDITOR. Well, I'm a married man and you know that dance—well, I'll take them.

[*CRITIC hands his fountain pen to ACTOR, who takes out a card and writes on it.*]

ACTOR. What's your name?

CREDITOR. Rosenzweig.

ACTOR. You don't say so.

[*He makes out pass and hands it to CREDITOR, who looks at it and then asks.*]

CREDITOR. Excuse me, couldn't you make it four?

ACTOR. How much did you say your bill was for?

CREDITOR. Four hundred and sixty kronen.

CRITIC. Don't you know, my dear fellow, the rate is two tickets under five hundred kronen!

ACTOR. Well, we'll make an exception in this case. He seems to be fond of the theatre.

[*Hands corrected pass to CREDITOR.*]

CREDITOR. Thank you. Thank you.

[*He starts out and is stopped by the ACTRESS, who tosses him a rose.*]

ACTRESS. Here's a rose for you, too.

[*CREDITOR exits. ACTRESS sits at piano and plays Chopin.*]

ACTOR. Will you do me a great favor?

ACTRESS. What is it, dear?

ACTOR. Don't play Chopin.

ACTRESS. Why not?

ACTOR. Because Chopin is not meant for me.

ACTRESS. For whom then?

ACTOR [*comes toward CRITIC*]. You know women love Chopin because he puts them in a mood—a mood of boundless romance—of longing, of desire of—of—in short, all the things that a decent married woman should not be thinking about.

ACTRESS. Oh, very well. [*She stops playing.*] Then I must not even do that now!

ACTOR [*across piano*]. Now you are happy. Now you're a martyr, a lamb led to the sacrifice—a suffering angel—aren't you, you poor thing?

ACTRESS. If you knew how little

I'm suffering you wouldn't be in such good spirits.

ACTOR. And then this contempt—this haughty scorn. You may not know it, my friend, but she hates the whole tribe of professionals. [*CRITIC moves significantly.*] She simply doesn't like actors. Only I didn't find that out until after I'd fallen in love with her. She despises me. She ignores me, she doesn't speak to me—she—

LIESL [*comes in with a bunch of red roses*]. Excuse me, ma'am, these came for you.

ACTRESS. Was there any message? Oh, what beautiful flowers! Was there any message?

LIESL. No, ma'am.

CRITIC. I wonder who sent them?

ACTOR [*sits on sofa left*]. I don't ask questions any more. Some silly girl, evidently. It isn't the first time by any means—oh, no, my dear friend! She gets flowers all the time. [*The ACTRESS, holding the roses, catches sight of small envelope—wired to one of the stems. She loosens it cautiously from its place and tries to hide it.*] That's right, hide it quickly before I see it!

ACTRESS. Hide what?

ACTOR. The envelope you found in the roses containing your admirer's card, with the declaration of his love. Give me that envelope!

ACTRESS. There was no envelope in the flowers.

ACTOR. There was. Give it to me at once.

ACTRESS. I will *not*.

ACTOR [*rises*]. I command you to give it to me. I want to know who the man is who expresses his admiration in red roses. This is the tenth

bouquet at least—admiration has its limits!

ACTRESS. I will not give it to you.

ACTOR. There—look at her! See her eyes flash! She thinks she'll get out of it that way. I command you to give me that letter!

ACTRESS [*rises and comes to him*]. I will not! You are right. There was a letter. But I will not give it to you. Yes, I know what name is on that card—but I will not tell it to you. Yes, the man who sent those flowers does admire me—does appreciate me—does love me, but I will not give you the letter. Now then.

[*The Actor looks at the CRITIC who walks away from the quarrel and up to the window going right and then up stage.*]

CRITIC. Yes, it is May now. The beautiful month of May.

ACTOR. And this is what we have come to after six months of married life!

ACTRESS. Yes, this is what we have come to.

[*She exits left, slamming door.*]

ACTOR [*poses at door*]. "Like bitter fruit, no longer taste alluring—" [*Clears throat and turns to CRITIC.*]

"Like bitter fruit, no longer taste alluring,

All sweetness lacking, and all fragrance vanished;

So, too, the heart—"

CRITIC. Oh, for God's sake! [*He crosses down right to settee.*] You know a situation like this is exceedingly trying to an old friend of the family. How can you so forget yourself? If you really must find out who sent the flowers, there are a thousand ways to do it without treating your wife like that. You know her; you know she'd rather cut her head off

than tell you who sent them. The simplest way is to go and ask the florist.

ACTOR [*crosses down and right*]. Why should I ask him?

CRITIC. You want to know who sent them, don't you?

ACTOR. I know who sent them.

CRITIC. You know?

ACTOR. Of course I know!

CRITIC. Very well, then—who sent them?

ACTOR. I did.

[*Crosses right.*]

CRITIC. What? You? You sent them?

ACTOR. Exactly. I sent them.

CRITIC. Are you crazy?

ACTOR. I am.

CRITIC. Well, I'll be damned! [*In a change of tone.*] You sent the roses? Your name is on the card?

ACTOR. No, it is not.

CRITIC. Whose is then?

ACTOR. I can't keep it to myself any longer. I've got to tell some one. Listen!

CRITIC. What's the trouble?

ACTOR. You know who—*what* Marie was before I married her?

CRITIC. I know—I mean I suspect, at least.

ACTOR. We both knew whatever there was to know. Why should we be ashamed to speak of it? She had many lovers—very many— If I should count merely those whom I knew personally—Hartung, Zellenberg—Krauss—

CRITIC. Don't bother—I made the inventory long ago—there were nine.

ACTOR. Counting me?

CRITIC. Without you.

ACTOR. Pardon me! There were seven.

CRITIC. You haven't counted Hochberg.

ACTOR. Of course not. That was only malicious gossip. Then there was Kohazy. He was madly in love with her but she couldn't endure him.

CRITIC. Very well, then—seven real cases—one gossip—and one she couldn't endure—nine altogether.

ACTOR. Seven!

CRITIC. Nine!

ACTOR. I cannot allow any one to cast aspersions upon my wife—there were seven.

CRITIC. Very well, we'll say seven. And even those seven we can't be sure about. The only thing we can be sure about is that I wasn't one of them.

ACTOR. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, old man, but don't weep over it now. There are more important things to talk about. We were married in December and now it's May—the six months are up—that fatal half year, that's as long as she can stand any of them. Now spring has come, and I feel that this apparently calm and cool little woman is all aflame inside—that she is losing control of herself. In a word, I'm in for the same fate as all the others. The marriage ceremony was all in vain—he is coming—I hear his footsteps—coming nearer and nearer.

CRITIC. Whose footsteps?

ACTOR. The tenth. The eighth—anyway, the new man. I feel he is coming—he is coming as surely as spring.

CRITIC. Hm! Hm! What makes you think so?

ACTOR. Chopin—day-dreams. She sits alone in the dark dreaming, she won't even light the lamp.

CRITIC. She won't light the lamp.

ACTOR. No, she won't even let the servants light the lamp.

CRITIC. She won't even let the servants light the lamp.

ACTOR. No.

CRITIC. That's bad.

ACTOR. I speak to her, she looks at me, but she doesn't hear me.

CRITIC. Very bad.

ACTOR. She gazes out of the window and plays Chopin; when she doesn't gaze out of the window she plays Chopin—she weeps when she's alone—that wouldn't be so bad—but if I take any notice of it she denies it—that is very bad.

CRITIC. That *is* very bad.

ACTOR. I have tried to sound the very depths of her thoughts—

CRITIC. Oh, that's worse. Well—

ACTOR. I have lost her—I feel it. Oh, what do I care, but at least I want to know what it is she wants. [CRITIC *looks at him.*] I'm a fool, and I'm in love. Dear Lord, I even thought that if I could ever find out what sort of man she is longing for, I would try to be that man myself. That's a good idea.

CRITIC. Don't be ridiculous.

ACTOR. You don't understand. What I mean is: I'd really try to be that man myself.

CRITIC. What kind of man?

ACTOR. I know what kind of man.

CRITIC. How?

ACTOR. We've talked it over calmly, very calmly.

CRITIC. Indeed.

ACTOR. She's explained it to me by the hour. What she's longing for is a soldier.

CRITIC. Oh, come. A soldier.

ACTOR. I don't mean the ordinary Hussar type, a young lieutenant.

She's had all that, that's passé. She's set her heart on something different, something foreign.

CRITIC. Foreign?

ACTOR. Yes, she told me that this soldier of her imagination is her ideal type of man, but that there are no such men nowadays. You know that's how women are.

CRITIC. Quite so.

ACTOR. But I've thought it all over, and such men do exist. Do you know what I thought of?

CRITIC. What?

ACTOR. One of those mysterious Russian Guardsmen attached to the Russian Embassy. What if she should meet a man like that?

CRITIC. What?

ACTOR. It would mean the end of me; my life would be crushed and broken. Here would be me, this tortured loving me, and there this nobody whom I could impersonate on the stage any minute. It's a Guardsman she wants. She wants a Guardsman. I know it, I know it!

CRITIC. Well?

ACTOR. But I won't give in as easy as that, my friend. This is no mere episode. I've been in love often enough in my life—and yet—God knows—I've never been really in love until now. This time it is the last—the greatest, the most torturing love, the love that exhausts my innermost power of feeling—the richest in beauty, the richest in pain—

LIESL [*enters right*]. Please, sir, the man is here again.

ACTOR. What man?

LIESL. The man with the bill.

ACTOR. What does he want?

LIESL. He says he doesn't want the tickets for to-morrow.

ACTOR. Why—why?

LIESL. Because you're not in the play, sir. He thought you were in the play, and he says that when you're not in the play the whole thing isn't worth anything.

ACTOR. Tell him to go away. Can't you see I'm busy? [*LIESL runs out.*] Very well, then, as I said—I tried to find out what sort of man—no, no— [*Recalling.*] Love, love, the richest in beauty, the richest in pain! Oh, yes. This is the love to which we cling with all our strength. No one—no one—shall take this woman from me! This is no mere episode. It is my fate—my all. No, not even if it means my ruin. I say, you know it's mighty decent of a simple fellow like that to refuse to go to the theatre when I'm not acting. Believe me, that makes me feel good.

CRITIC. Oh, yes.

ACTOR [*goes up to door right*]. Is the man still there?

LIESL [*outside door*]. No, sir; he's gone.

ACTOR [*returns to CRITIC*]. Well, as I said, all at once I saw clearly that the end had come, that she was drifting away from me day by day. The Guardsman is approaching—and then one fine day I made up my mind.

CRITIC. To, so to speak, meet him halfway.

ACTOR. Not exactly. But I said to myself—she needs a new man, a new sensation, she needs a Guardsman. Very well, she shall have him. I will be that man myself; I will play the Guardsman.

CRITIC. What?

ACTOR. Well, you critics say of an actor that a hundred different personalities live in his one soul. Very well, then, why shouldn't this

Guardsman live within my soul?

CRITIC. W-what?

ACTOR [*more and more excited*]. Either I am a good actor, or I am not. This will be the supreme test.

CRITIC. Do you mean to tell me that you intend to act a part for your wife?

ACTOR. Exactly.

CRITIC. That is absurd.

ACTOR. Quite absurd. . . . Every man who loves, and is not loved in return, is absurd.

CRITIC. And how are you going to carry out this plan?

ACTOR [*rising*]. Perfectly simple. I will disguise myself as a Guardsman, play my part, conquer her. I will make her love me again.

CRITIC. Ridiculous—

ACTOR. Everything is ridiculous—that a cast-off lover may do—except shoot himself. No, I'll try the ridiculous first.

CRITIC. Has it really gone that far?

ACTOR. That far—that far—that far—

[*He buries his face in his hands.*]

CRITIC. I say, you aren't going to cry about it?

ACTOR. I can't help it. I'm so used to shedding real tears on the stage that I can't always keep them back at home.

CRITIC. But you don't mind if I laugh at all this, do you?

ACTOR. I don't mind at all. I laughed at it often enough myself, at first. Later, I merely smiled. And then my brain began to work—

CRITIC. Hm.

ACTOR. You know how an actor's brain works when he takes up a new part. Well, that's how this part got into my blood and won't let me go.

CRITIC. But then—

ACTOR. I began to work it out. I planned all the details, costume, make-up, voice, step, carriage and gesture, everything—realizing all the time that this woman is irretrievably lost to me, that only in this way could I ever bring my wife to love me again. You understand?

CRITIC. Suppose she recognizes you?

ACTOR. Then she's recognized me. Things can't be any worse than they are now.

CRITIC. If she does not recognize you. What then?

ACTOR. Then one of two things will happen. Either she will yield or she will not. If she does not, then I will be very happy. For I will know that she is true to me. If she does yield, then I will be very unhappy—but at least I will know.

CRITIC. Um.

ACTOR. But, anyway, I will have had one sincere kiss from her. What if it is the end? [*Crosses left.*] Better an end of everything than to live on this way.

CRITIC. Well, what have you actually done?

ACTOR. I tell you this thing got possession of me. One day as I was walking down the street I passed a place where they make uniforms, and before I knew what I was doing, I found myself facing the proprietor and heard myself saying, "I want a complete outfit of an officer of the Russian Imperial Guards."

CRITIC. And the tailor?

ACTOR. Delighted to see me. He knew me, of course. He bowed, and asked: "For a new part?" "Yes," I answered. "Is it a big part, sir, a good part?" "It is indeed," I re-

plied. "The best and biggest part I have ever played. I've never been so afraid of any part before."

CRITIC. And then?

ACTOR. In a few days the complete outfit was delivered to my friend Arnold, next door. I had to let him into the secret, too. The uniform is in his apartment.

CRITIC. Have you had it on yet?

ACTOR. Have I had it on! For days I've been walking up and down in front of that window.

CRITIC. You weren't afraid of being recognized?

ACTOR. No. I believed in myself, in my talent, in my part. If I can do the same thing for money—for fame—why shouldn't I do it when it means far more? I knew I was good. Fifteen times at least—I walked past that window.

CRITIC. And your wife?

ACTOR. She was never there.

CRITIC. Well, then?

ACTOR. But one day she was. It was a Tuesday about twenty-five minutes to seven. She looked down at me as I passed and she seemed to smile. That frightened me—I thought that surely she had recognized me.

CRITIC. I am certain she did.

ACTOR. No! No! I put it to the test. I saluted—oh, modestly, and she immediately pulled down the shade. She was furious. I was the happiest man in the world as I made my exit, happy as the husband who knows that his wife is true to him—and happy as the actor who has made a success of his part.

CRITIC. Perhaps she was only playing up to you?

ACTOR. No. I have positive proof that she did not recognize me. What

do you suppose happened when I came home that evening?

CRITIC. Well?

ACTOR [*sits sofa right*]. She began to talk about it at supper. She told me that that afternoon an impertinent but very good-looking young officer of the Russian Guards had paraded ostentatiously beneath her window. She seemed very annoyed.

CRITIC. Well, then?

ACTOR. But she said there was something so strange, so mysterious about him, she couldn't get him out of her mind. Wouldn't that drive you crazy?

CRITIC. Possibly.

ACTOR. You may believe it or not, but the next time I passed she deliberately encouraged me. I saluted and she smiled.

CRITIC. And then?

ACTOR. Then I grew bolder. The next day I sent flowers with a card—I even had cards printed—Wassily Samsonov—you know that was clever. I apologized for my window promenade. She brought the flowers home that night and I made a terrible scene, just as I did a few minutes ago. You know, that little cat looked at me and told me that they had been sent by some silly girl. Every day after that I sent flowers to her at the theatre, but she never brought them home again and never mentioned them to me. Then a letter came.

CRITIC. A letter?

ACTOR. Yes, from me.

CRITIC. From you?

ACTOR. Yes. Oh, I knew what I was doing! I said that I had long been an admirer of the gifted artist,

but as we had no mutual friends, I had no way of making her acquaintance. However, I wondered if she had any objections to meeting me personally.

CRITIC. Had she?

ACTOR. Here is her answer. Four words only.

[*Gives CRITIC a slip of paper.*]

CRITIC [*reads*]. "I have no objection."

ACTOR. "I have no objection."

CRITIC. Well, this is beginning to interest me.

ACTOR. Don't get excited. I made up my mind to act quickly. Last week I wired the manager of the theatre at Olmutz that I was available for three evenings. He was wild with joy, of course—tumbled all over himself to accept, and announced it in all the papers. Then I sent her another letter. It came yesterday. She thinks she hides it here. [*He opens a book under the piano cover and takes out a letter.*] This is what I wrote: "Dear Madam . . . great and revered artist . . . I see by the newspapers that your husband is to appear in Olmutz for several evenings. Please do not misunderstand if I, as a devoted admirer of your art, ask permission to pay my respects to you in your own home. If nothing happens to prevent, would you have the great kindness to appear in your window at six o'clock to-morrow afternoon?"—That's to-day. "If you will pull back the curtain and look down into the street I will know that I am the happiest of men. I will be watching from a cab nearby and half an hour later I will do myself the great honor of calling on the lady

whose genius is your country's chief pride.

"Most respectfully,

"Your humble servant,

"WASSILY SAMSONOV."

CRITIC. And your engagement in Olmutz?

ACTOR. Called off. I wired this morning, "Unavoidably detained." At six o'clock I leave here, go next door, dress in fifteen minutes and return to my own house for a special star engagement in my own home in the first really great and serious part I have ever played in all my life. Now you know all. The performance begins at six o'clock.

[*He sits on piano stool with back to CRITIC.*]

CRITIC. It's almost six now. What's the matter with you?

ACTOR [*abstractedly*]. What?

CRITIC. I asked you what's the matter with you?

ACTOR. I am in a cab down there in the street waiting with beating heart, wondering whether she will give me the signal.

CRITIC. Oh, come now. You know she won't.

ACTRESS [*comes in left*]. It's six o'clock. You'll miss your train.

ACTOR. No, I won't.

CRITIC. When does the train leave?

ACTOR. At half-past six. I have plenty of time.

CRITIC. Then it's about time to go.

ACTRESS. We'll ask Liesl if the cab has come.

ACTOR. No, I'm sure it's there. [*The clock strikes six.*] Six o'clock—exactly six o'clock.

ACTRESS. Six o'clock—exactly six o'clock.

CRITIC. Six o'clock—exactly six o'clock.

[*The ACTRESS walks up to window and gives signal, left of piano.*]

ACTOR [*rises, gets coat and goes up to her*]. Well, good-bye, sweetheart. Take care of yourself and don't forget me.

ACTRESS [*turning from the window*]. What is it?

ACTOR [*ironically*]. I was bidding farewell to you, my dear. I said, "good-bye, darling, take care of yourself and don't forget me."

ACTRESS [*coming down in front of piano*]. You haven't forgotten anything?

ACTOR. No, I haven't.

ACTRESS. Well, good-bye, you can go.

ACTOR. I am going, even without your kind permission.

ACTRESS. I didn't say it to offend you! But what else can I say, since you must go? I can't say "please don't go."

CRITIC. Children!

ACTOR. Is that all?

ACTRESS [*crosses left*]. Yes, yes—that's all.

ACTOR. Is that your farewell? Is that all you have to say to me at the last minute?

ACTRESS. Good heavens! You'll be back in three days. You're not going to Siberia, you know.

ACTOR [*comes down to her*]. The journey to Olmutz may prove just as fatal as the journey to Siberia.

[*The ACTRESS looks at CRITIC, turns ironically and sits on sofa.*]

CRITIC. I think he's quite right. You don't even kiss him.

ACTOR [*turning to go*]. No, thank

you—I don't want it unless you think of it yourself.

ACTRESS. Come here, you fool!

ACTOR [*in door*]. I won't!

ACTRESS. Come here! I want to kiss you, you foolish boy.

ACTOR [*goes to her, pretends stupidity*]. What is it you want?

ACTRESS [*holding up her cheek to him*]. Well?

ACTOR. Oh, please!

ACTRESS. Kiss me!

ACTOR. Just as you like. [*Kisses her forehead.*] God bless you.

ACTRESS. Do you call that a kiss? Oh, very well.

ACTOR. Oh, for pity's sake!

ACTRESS [*goes to him and throws her arms about his neck and whispers with assumed passion*]. You foolish boy—you child! [*They kiss.*] My darling!

ACTOR [*almost in tears*]. Sweetheart—good-bye—good-bye.

ACTRESS [*follows him to door*]. Good-bye! Good-bye!

CRITIC. Good luck to you.

[*Crosses to sofa, where he sits.*]

LIESL drifts in from right upper door, crying.]

ACTRESS. Liesl, tidy up the room a bit.

LIESL. Yes'm.

ACTRESS. Where's mama?

LIESL. In there.

ACTRESS. What's she doing?

LIESL. Washing the windows.

ACTRESS. Tell her to bring me my tea-gowns.

CRITIC. You know, I may be mistaken, but it seems to me that my fair hostess is interested in anything or anybody but my humble self. Of course, that's of no importance.

ACTRESS. If it's of no importance, why the irony?

CRITIC. Possibly I wanted to let you know how superfluous I am about here, but as I have been just as superfluous for the last eight years, and I'm still here, I don't see why I should go now. Unless, of course, you're expecting some one.

ACTRESS. Granted I'm expecting some one, how does that concern you?

CRITIC. Not at all. Don't imagine, madame, that I wish to set myself up as a chaperon—but, are you expecting some one?

ACTRESS. You are an old idiot!

CRITIC. You are nervous—you want to get rid of me, and because you see that I know it, you pretend to deny it. Your eyes are shining, you don't quite know what to say, you are much prettier than you were a half hour ago. What is it, Marie?

ACTRESS. You are a dear old idiot.

[*She embraces him. MAMA enters left, with tea-gowns.*]

MAMA. Don't let me disturb you. Here are the tea-gowns. Don't misunderstand her when she kisses you. It was the same in my day. When I kissed a man, it meant that I wanted to get rid of him.

CRITIC. Naturally.

MAMA. Shut up!

CRITIC. You know, there's something invincibly distinguished about you, Mama. If you should ever leave here, you must come and live with me.

MAMA. What cheek!

CRITIC. And keep house for me.

MAMA [*calling*]. Liesl, get his hat.

[*LIESL runs in from left, and crosses to hall right.*]

ACTRESS. Liesl, fix yourself up a bit.

MAMA [*showing ACTRESS two tea-*

gowns]. Well, which one? This one is torn.

ACTRESS. Let me see it. Why didn't you mend it?

MAMA. I'm a mama, not a seamstress. Washing windows all day. I'm sick and tired of it all.

ACTRESS [*takes the tea-gowns and exits left*]. Don't begin again. Please, please, Mama, my nerves are in a state!

MAMA [*to LIESL, who comes to her with CRITIC's hat and cane*]. Liesl, go and help Bebi. [*LIESL hurries out, left, and MAMA turns to CRITIC, holding out his hat and cane to him.*] Well, here's your hat!

CRITIC. What a charming creature you are, dear golden heart. I'll go when I'm ready.

MAMA. Oh, my!

[*She turns to piano and munches candy out of box.*]

CRITIC [*calling to ACTRESS off stage left*]. Are you going to the opera this evening?

ACTRESS [*off stage left*]. I don't know yet.

CRITIC. Have you got your seats?

ACTRESS. Yes. Krauss got me one of the court boxes.

CRITIC. That's nice. If you don't like the opera you can take a nap in the anteroom. That's what I do. Which one?

ACTRESS. First tier, right. Number four.

CRITIC. You're not sure you're going yet?

ACTRESS. No.

CRITIC. Why not?

ACTRESS. I'm expecting a caller. I don't know when I will be free. If it should be too late, I may not go at all.

CRITIC. It's easy enough to get rid

of a caller if you don't want him to stay.

MAMA. Yes, it looks like it.

CRITIC [*turning on her*]. Hm, there's no doubt about it! None! None!

MAMA. No, no! What?

CRITIC. You are a charming creature. It's a pity I didn't meet you thirty years ago.

MAMA [*rises*]. Well, it's too late now. Here's your hat.

CRITIC. You don't want me to go?

MAMA [*ironically*]. Oh, no!

CRITIC. Well, I'll stay. [*Puts hat on piano.*] You'll probably go after all, won't you?

ACTRESS. Probably.

CRITIC. I expect to be there myself. I'll drop in and see you. May I?

ACTRESS [*after hesitation*]. Oh, yes. Do. That'll be awfully nice.

CRITIC [*rises*]. You know, Mama, I'm getting awfully fond of you.

MAMA. Yes.

CRITIC. Yes, I'm going to do something for you.

MAMA. Yes.

CRITIC. I'm going to let you hand me my hat, yourself.

MAMA. Go to the devil!

[*CRITIC takes hat, turns left, and then swings right, and meets MAMA's glowering visage.*]

CRITIC. It's always very nice to see you.

MAMA. I wish I could say the same.

[*CRITIC saunters out, stopping at the door.*]

CRITIC. Take care of yourself, Mama. Petrified obelisk, we all need you.

[*MAMA gets herself a drink from cabinet, eats chocolate, then*

looks at ACTRESS's picture and sits crying on sofa. LIESL enters left.]

LIESL. What's the matter?

MAMA. I'm crying because I love Bebi so much. I can't control myself. I'm so happy.

LIESL. What's the matter?

MAMA. Didn't I tell you to say ma'am to me?

LIESL. Yes, ma'am.

MAMA. She's in love with some one—but don't give it away or I'll land you one you won't forget. She's in love with some one.

LIESL. Yes, ma'am. Not her husband?

MAMA. Some one else, you fool! Oh, what she has endured with this man—but, thank the Lord, she is alive again, she breathes again!

LIESL. How do you know?

MAMA. I know her better than her mother could. I'm her mama. I can tell by the way she walks, by something in her eye, that she is beginning to think about some one. I know my darling and don't you say I don't. I'm her mama, her loving mama!

LIESL. And her with such a handsome husband!

MAMA. That's right. Try to hide it. I know that you are in love with him. I can see without my lorgnette. Now don't deny it, Liesl. You ought to be ashamed of yourself—having such thoughts, in a respectable house like this, before my daughter!

ACTRESS [*enters left*]. Liesl, I shall want some tea. In tall glasses. Fix yourself up a bit. Is my gown all right? How do you like my dress, Liesl?

MAMA. It's lovely! It's beautiful!

LIESL. It's lovely!

[*Exits right to kitchen.*]

MAMA. Oh, this is crooked here!

[*Kneels to fix train of ACTRESS's tea-gown.*]

ACTRESS. No, no—it's meant to be like that!

MAMA. Oh, you are beautiful! You are superb, you are magnificent!

ACTRESS. I can't help being beautiful, can I, Mama?

MAMA. And you are quite right, my child. A woman's got only one life to live and when it's with her husband— [*Searches for phrase.*] A regular petrified obelisk.

[*She beams at ACTRESS.*]

ACTRESS. Mama.

MAMA. Yes, dearie.

ACTRESS. You don't like my husband.

MAMA. What do you expect of me? I'm to like the villain who robs me of my daily bread!

ACTRESS. What?

MAMA. In the old days, when your real gentlemen friends used to come here, what with this and that, I could afford—well, I could afford to keep up my social position.

ACTRESS. Mama!

MAMA. I used to chaperon you and see something of the social world I've been used to. It's not like what I was used to. My heart cracks when I think of it.

ACTRESS. All right, Mama. Control yourself. You shall have your social position again to-night.

MAMA. What, dearie?

ACTRESS. Instead of scrubbing the kitchen floors, you shall go with me to the opera.

MAMA [*delighted*]. Oh, you darling! Didn't I say that you're alive again? [*She goes to inner room left.*]

Bebi's nice to me because she's going to be nice to herself.

[*The ACTRESS, left alone in the dimly lighted room, sits on the sofa, takes up a hand mirror lying on the piano back of her and looks at herself in it. Then she lights a bulb in the piano lamp, and goes to the switch at the door left, and turns it. The wall brackets, left, are lit, but they are too strong for her and she switches them off again. Then she returns to the sofa, sits and puts on another light in the piano lamp. Now the light is right for her and she goes to the piano and plays her Chopin Nocturne. In the middle of it, she stops to look at herself again in the mirror, puts it down and resumes playing at exactly the place where she interrupted herself. The doorbell rings and LIESL rushes in excitedly with a card. The ACTRESS looks at it without stopping the Chopin.*]

ACTRESS [*reading card*]. Who is it?

LIESL. A General.

ACTRESS. Show him in.

[*LIESL goes out and shows in the husband disguised as a Cossack Prince.*]

GUARDSMAN [*he speaks with a strong Russian accent*]. Prodidje, pojalesta.

[*ACTRESS stops playing.*]

ACTRESS. Delighted. I appreciate the honor.

GUARDSMAN. I am Wassily Samsonov.

[*He kisses her hand.*]

ACTRESS. Charmed. Won't you sit down?

GUARDSMAN. I must beg a thou-

sand pardons for seeking your personal acquaintance in this gauche fashion.

ACTRESS. Gauche? Not at all. I wrote you I wanted to meet you. You have no need for excuses.

GUARDSMAN. I am so glad you are not angry with me.

ACTRESS. I am an actress. I live for my public. I avail myself of the freedom permitted by my profession which spares us so many conventional stupidities—gaucheries.

[*Sits sofa.*]

GUARDSMAN. I am terribly happy. [*Kisses her hand.*] I was very afraid.

ACTRESS. I hope you are gradually recovering.

GUARDSMAN. Some, not many minutes, and I will feel good to make the correct thing alone with the great artist—the truly great artist so honored and esteemed— [*They laugh embarrassedly.*] Please to pardon my childish embarrassment, but we soldiers still take our illusions with us to the theatre.

ACTRESS. I hope that you will lose none of your illusions now that we have met.

GUARDSMAN. Quite the contrary.

ACTRESS. Yes. I feel that, too. Quite the contrary. Will you have some tea? It's so Russian.

GUARDSMAN. *Merci.*

ACTRESS. *Oui merci ou non merci?*

GUARDSMAN. You speak French charmingly.

ACTRESS [*very pleased*]. *Merci, de tout, de tout, de tout.* Sit here. [*He crosses and sits right.*] How many lumps?

GUARDSMAN. One.

ACTRESS. One.

GUARDSMAN. One.

ACTRESS. You take only one lump of sugar with your tea?

GUARDSMAN. I think it is not manly to care for the sweets.

ACTRESS. My husband takes four lumps.

GUARDSMAN. Even without sugar the lot of the husband is sweet.

[*He rises and bows.*]

ACTRESS. You emphasize the word "husband" so oddly.

GUARDSMAN. I do not take husbands too seriously.

ACTRESS. How like you aristocrats. You are all alike. We simple folk often find our truest happiness in marriage.

GUARDSMAN. Forgive me! I would be sorry if there is anything in what I have said to offend you.

ACTRESS. You are forgiven.

[*She hands him a glass of tea.*]

GUARDSMAN. Many thanks.

ACTRESS [*with a smile*]. Oh!

[*There is a silence.*]

GUARDSMAN [*sits again*]. When I had the pleasure of coming in here, you were playing Chopin, *n'est ce pas?*

ACTRESS. I was. Do you like Chopin?

GUARDSMAN. Ah, yes. He writes so soft, so melancholicky.

ACTRESS. I like him, too. [*Stirring.*] You know—Chopin's music is autumnal. When the year is dying and the last fragrance of the garden floats in at the open window—when the sun is setting—then Chopin's weeping music touches the heart.

[*She drinks.*]

GUARDSMAN. *Da, da!*

[*They drink.*]

ACTRESS. But now that it's spring, and the beginning of things—

GUARDSMAN [*stops drinking and rises*]. Pardon!

ACTRESS. Don't you think some other music would be more suitable? I really don't know how I came to be playing Chopin.

[*She sighs.*]

GUARDSMAN [*goes up left of her*]. You are sighing.

ACTRESS. It meant nothing.

GUARDSMAN. You artists have such a profound—soul life.

ACTRESS. Some of us have. How old are you?

GUARDSMAN. Thirty-two.

ACTRESS. Thirty-two! How young!

GUARDSMAN. Do I look more old?

ACTRESS. Oh, no! No!

GUARDSMAN. Your husband is not here, no!

ACTRESS. No!

GUARDSMAN. I see by the paper your distinguished husband is staring in Olmutz.

ACTRESS. Yes.

GUARDSMAN. I very much regret deeply that this opportunity of making your acquaintance—for which I am eternally grateful to you and to your gracious—how do you say—*non habituel*—

ACTRESS. Unconventionality?

GUARDSMAN [*kisses her hand.*]. *Merci!* Thank you. What I meant was I regret that I must put in the pocket for the time being the pleasure of meeting your gifted husband. I am really a great admirer of his art.

ACTRESS. Oh, are you!

GUARDSMAN [*with fervor*]. Oh, yes! He impersonates with such genius, such incomparable genius the—the higher life of the soul.

ACTRESS. Oh, yes!

GUARDSMAN. Yes.

ACTRESS [*squeezing lemon in glass viciously*]. Yes.

GUARDSMAN. Yes.

TOGETHER. Yes.

GUARDSMAN. Yes, but as you say, Chopin's music is not the music for the spring.

ACTRESS. No.

[*Puts cup down.*]

GUARDSMAN. No. Chopin is renunciation and spring is love.

ACTRESS. Love! You see you cannot talk to an actress for five minutes without mentioning the word love.

GUARDSMAN. Pardon! That was not meant for the actress.

ACTRESS. For whom then?

GUARDSMAN. For the very charmingly beautiful woman.

[*He rises and bows. Kisses both hands.*]

ACTRESS. You are making love to me already.

GUARDSMAN. May I say I am happy you have recognized it?

ACTRESS. I have recognized it all the more quickly because I do not feel altogether free of blame, myself.

GUARDSMAN. If there is any blame, I will take it all upon myself.

ACTRESS. Oh, no! I permitted you to come here under these peculiar circumstances, I cannot allow you to take the entire blame upon yourself.

GUARDSMAN. Do you regret it?

ACTRESS. No!

GUARDSMAN. Then I may hope for the opposite of regret.

ACTRESS. Perhaps!

GUARDSMAN. With one little word you have made me happy.

[*He approaches her.*]

ACTRESS. Do you smoke? These are not very good cigarettes. My hus-

band doesn't care for anything better.

GUARDSMAN [*emphatically*]. These are very good cigarettes. With a single word, you have made me very happy—a lonely soldier, who all his life has avoided women.

ACTRESS. Don't, don't take what I said so seriously.

GUARDSMAN. It is not what you say but my heart, he tells me—

ACTRESS. Do not trust your heart too seriously.

GUARDSMAN. You destroy my little hope.

ACTRESS. I object to the word "hope."

GUARDSMAN. Please do not hurt me so. [*He sits and buries head.*] *Vocnoyu Taspe von.*

ACTRESS. I beg your pardon.

GUARDSMAN. *Vocnogu Bosje moy.* [*Crosses to right.*]

ACTRESS. Are you angry with me?

GUARDSMAN. No, no! I had better go. My feeling may carry me too far.

ACTRESS. Then this is farewell.

GUARDSMAN. After what I have done, what can it be but farewell?

ACTRESS. No, no, no! I'm going to the opera to-night. Won't you call on me in my box?

GUARDSMAN. Yes, I will take the liberty of calling.

ACTRESS. We can continue our conversation in the anteroom.

GUARDSMAN. My sincere thanks. Especially for the anteroom.

ACTRESS. I object to your thanks—and the misunderstanding, and forgive you both.

[*He kisses her hand and leaves her hastily. She goes to piano and is about to play as*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

BURLINGAME

PUBLIC

ACT TWO

[*SCENE: The anteroom of a royal box at the opera. The first act of "Madame Butterfly" is in progress.*]

The set is triangular, with the entrance to the box proper about center in the longest side of the angle presented to the audience. The swinging doors of the box proper are shut at the rise of the curtain. The entrance from the foyer is right through swinging doors. After a few bars of music, the USHER enters, and holds the door open for MAMA and the ACTRESS to enter. MAMA is elegantly and highly ornamented with false blonde curls and make-up. The ACTRESS carries the red roses from Act One. The box is furnished in dark red and gold.]

USHER. This way, please!

ACTRESS. Oh, we're late!

USHER. Yes, the first act's already begun.

ACTRESS. Good house?

USHER. Sold out. Beg pardon, would you like a program—or shall I get you an opera glass?

ACTRESS. No, thank you. Tell me, aren't you Mrs. Spengler?

USHER. Yes, madam. And the dear, kind lady still remembers me?

ACTRESS. Of course I do! How is your husband? Wasn't he our assistant property man?

USHER. Yes, dear, sweet lady.

ACTRESS. He's been pensioned, hasn't he?

USHER. Yes, dear, sweet lady,

since November last. Oh, you're so beautiful to-night, madam!

[MAMA gets coins from bag.]

ACTRESS. Really. [Goes to box.] Thank you, Mama.

MAMA. Yes!

ACTRESS. Give Mrs. Spengler something!

[MAMA rises and gives USHER coin, comes back to box.]

ACTRESS [seated in box]. Whom are you bowing to?

MAMA [loudly]. Count von Hochhausen. He bowed first.

ACTRESS. Where is he?

MAMA. Second box from the stage.

ACTRESS. Yes, yes! How do you do.

[She bows. They both sit looking down at the supposed audience through their opera glasses.]

MAMA. There's Dr. Feldman, twelfth row, orchestra, left side. He just bowed.

ACTRESS. I see him. [Bows.]. How do you do? Where's Altenbacher? I can't find him!

MAMA. He must be there. He's never missing. Oh, there he is in his usual place, hidden behind Tilly Braunschweig. She's so fat you can't see him.

ACTRESS. Oh, yes! [Bows.] Bow nicely to him, Mama!

MAMA [bows very cordially]. Go to hell!

ACTRESS. Why, Mama!

MAMA. He can't hear it.

ACTRESS. But he can see it in your face.

MAMA. I don't care. Oh, there's Dr. Hirschler with all the children. My dear, there's going to be another. The girls are waving to you.

ACTRESS. How do, girls.

[Waves her hand, then bows more ceremoniously.]

MAMA. Who are you bowing to now?

ACTRESS. That's the banker March. You don't know him, Mama. He was a friend of mine at the time when you—

MAMA [waspy]. Why don't you say it?—when I was—

ACTRESS [interrupting]. If you're going to be nasty, Mama, I'll send you home.

MAMA [elaborately sweet]. I beg your pardon.

USHER. A gentleman asks if he may see you.

ACTRESS. Oh, oh, certainly, show him in. [USHER exits. To MAMA.] Mama, is my nose shiny?

MAMA [pouffers ACTRESS's nose]. Bebi, Bebi.

ACTRESS. Now, Mama, be as elegant as you can.

MAMA [blows her nose]. Yes, I will.

[The GUARDSMAN enters.]

GUARDSMAN. Madame!

ACTRESS. Ah, you, how good of you to come!

GUARDSMAN. Thank you.

ACTRESS. Mama! [MAMA comes down center a bit.] May I present, Prince Wassily Samsonov, my Mama?

GUARDSMAN [to USHER after bowing to MAMA. MAMA and ACTRESS whisper]. If you will be hearing about my chauffeur coming, will you let me know?

USHER. Yes, Your Highness.

MAMA [aside to USHER]. Mrs. Spengler, if anybody should be looking for the Count or for my daughter—

USHER. Yes, ma'am, I understand.

MAMA. You may go now.

USHER. Yes, ma'am.

[*Does not move.*]

GUARDSMAN [*to the ACTRESS*]. It's absolute slavery. I'm not my own master for one hour together. I must show myself to my ambassador. There's a ball at the Palace to-night, and I must go!

[*MAMA comes down to the USHER.*]

MAMA [*takes some money from her bag, gives it to the USHER*]. Here's a krone for you.

USHER. Thank you.

[*Goes out.*]

MAMA [*takes a notebook from her bag, rests it against the wall, wets the pencil and then writes, murmuring*]. Usher, two kronen.

GUARDSMAN [*turning to her*]. What are you writing, madame?

MAMA. Just a little—asperism that occurred to me.

GUARDSMAN. Can I hear?

MAMA.

"Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand—"

GUARDSMAN. *Quel esprit!*

MAMA. No, it's Goethe.

GUARDSMAN. You visit with the opera often, I suppose.

MAMA. Not so much lately. I'm busy keeping house.

GUARDSMAN. Oh—then you make the housekeeping for your charming daughter.

MAMA. Yes. These artists, you know. [*Crosses to ACTRESS.*] You good for nothing little genius.

GUARDSMAN. In this strange Bohemian existence this charming little house mama must be a great comfort.

ACTRESS. Oh, yes, she's a great comfort.

GUARDSMAN. It is remarkable how much you resemble the mama.

ACTRESS. There, mama, does that please you?

MAMA [*aside to ACTRESS*]. For what you give me, I even have to look like you— So you think we look alike, Prince. So many people have said it but there's them think she looks more like her father.

GUARDSMAN. What! You did know her father?

MAMA [*laughs loudly*]. Upon my word, Prince! Listen to him, Marie. Know her father.

GUARDSMAN. *Da. Da. Da.* That was humoristic—I thought you meant—his father—I mean—then your husband lives here?

MAMA [*changing to tears*]. He's dead. It cracks my heart when I think of it.

ACTRESS. It cracks all our hearts, dear. Console yourself with the music.

MAMA [*turns to box and sits.*]. Yes, Bebi, I'm just crazy about the opera.

GUARDSMAN. Are you?

ACTRESS [*closes box doors*]. You don't care for the opera?

GUARDSMAN. To tell true—no.

[*The door is closed.*]

ACTRESS. Then the honor of this visit is due entirely to me? You don't care for music at all? I thought this afternoon you were fond of Chopin.

GUARDSMAN [*advances to her*]. But now there is something else which interests me infinitely more.

ACTRESS. What can that be?

GUARDSMAN [*takes her hand*]. Do not ask *what* but *who*.

ACTRESS. Curious—

GUARDSMAN. What is curious?

ACTRESS. And how sad.

GUARDSMAN. Sad?

ACTRESS. Life, life—is sad. You

see, Prince, we've known each other only since six o'clock this afternoon—and yet it is already necessary to make certain matters clear—

GUARDSMAN. I am very sorry if there is anything in what I have said—

ACTRESS. No, no. You misconstrue my words. I do not object to your saying nice things to me—a woman—an actress needs that sort of thing—yes, she needs it. I confess I need it as the field needs the rain.

GUARDSMAN. Well, then.

ACTRESS. But you are so revoltingly sure of the outcome. Such assurance, as far as I am concerned, is quite misplaced. I do not like it!

GUARDSMAN. Pardon.

ACTRESS [*turns to him again*]. And now all is clear between us, is it not? I do not mind your making love to me but you must not do it with so definite a purpose. And there is one other little thing that you must remember. [*Goes to left.*] I am a married woman. I have a husband. And I love my husband.

GUARDSMAN. Do you—do you—

ACTRESS. Why does this prosaic confession excite you?

GUARDSMAN. It excites me—it excites me very much, it excites me because everything about you excites me. You believe when I tell you that I came to you with all possible esteem and respect, you believe it, yes?

ACTRESS [*sits*]. Yes.

GUARDSMAN. You believe it because I say it, because I write it, and because you think that I am a gentleman?

ACTRESS. Because I know you are a gentleman.

GUARDSMAN [*goes to her*]. *Da*, a gentleman. But I am also a very

strong man, a soldier, and do you believe that I can stand so near to you, a woman with so warm blood and so pulsing nerve, and feel respect and esteem only? Is it possible?

ACTRESS. No, no.

GUARDSMAN. Then, if you think there is some other feeling beside esteem and respect—do you permit me to give it a name?

ACTRESS. Yes.

GUARDSMAN [*retreats*]. Have you consider carefully?

ACTRESS. If you give me time to think it over, then I may not allow it.

GUARDSMAN. Well, then I will give you time to think it over.

[*He is about to sit right when she speaks.*]

ACTRESS. I have thought it over. Yes. You may say it.

GUARDSMAN. Then you permit it. Then I will tell you. This other feeling is love. [*She leans toward him. He retreats.*] But I respect what you have said. I respect the fact that you are in love with your husband.

ACTRESS. I did not say that.

GUARDSMAN. You did say it.

ACTRESS. No, I did not. I said that I love my husband and between loving and being in love there is a wider gulf than between not loving and being in love.

GUARDSMAN. Well, that make me very—that make me very happy.

ACTRESS. That pleases you?

GUARDSMAN. Oh, yes, but I think it is your husband who has little reason to be happy.

ACTRESS. Perhaps.

GUARDSMAN. But I hear that when you marry him, you marry for love.

ACTRESS. Yes, but it was his love—although—God knows—

GUARDSMAN. What does God know?

ACTRESS. God knows everything.

GUARDSMAN. Yes. I have seen your husband often on the stage. A very handsome man.

ACTRESS. Yes. He is handsome.

GUARDSMAN. One might say he was incomparably handsome.

ACTRESS [*indifferently*]. Many women admire him.

GUARDSMAN. And you do not?

ACTRESS. Oh, yes, I admire him, not only because he is handsome but because he is an intelligent man as well—

GUARDSMAN. *Da, da.*

ACTRESS. Which is very rare among actors. They are all so conceited.

GUARDSMAN. *Da!* He is intelligent.

ACTRESS. Yes.

GUARDSMAN. One might call him a very intelligent man.

ACTRESS. I wouldn't go as far as that. A good actor and an intelligent man—that might be; but a *very* intelligent man—who would make up his face, wear a wig, and recite memorized lines—no, that's not very plausible.

GUARDSMAN. Then you despise actors.

ACTRESS. I do not despise actors at all. Only I don't like it when my husband—oh, well, we won't bother about that. I make the best of it.

[*Turns up center.*]

GUARDSMAN. That mean that you are happy?

ACTRESS. Not happy.

GUARDSMAN. Strange. When I look at you with the eye of the audience, I can hardly imagine a very

more happy people, having fame together, hearing the storm of applause together, tasting the sweets of triumph together—oh, that must be very intoxicating.

ACTRESS. And then, night after night, to go home to the same old supper. Oh, yes, that's very intoxicating.

GUARDSMAN. I cannot imagine your husband talking this way.

ACTRESS. No?

GUARDSMAN. I am sure it give him the greatest joy to act with you, and have supper with you.

ACTRESS. I hardly believe my husband gets any particular thrill out of having supper with me.

GUARDSMAN. How different men are! You imagine that your husband could find it dull to have supper with you. But, madame, have you ever perhaps imagined that it might not be so dull for you, if you perhaps, have supper with some one else?

ACTRESS. If I—you mean—

GUARDSMAN. May I—may I speak free?

ACTRESS. As freely as you like.

GUARDSMAN [*bending low*]. I mean have you ever thought that you might sometime—sometime deceive your husband?

ACTRESS [*rises, goes grandly to box*]. Mama.

[*He takes cloak up, murmuring, "I knew it, I knew it," and is about to go when the ACTRESS returns.*]

ACTRESS. Do you know, Prince, why I have come back?

GUARDSMAN. Why?

ACTRESS. Because I felt that I had been a little too harsh with you.

GUARDSMAN. No. No. [*The*

ACTRESS *is surprised.*] Well, maybe so.

ACTRESS. And a little unjust. I should not have left you in such an insulting fashion. After all, I was to blame. I should never have allowed you to ask this—this terrible question.

GUARDSMAN. Yes—yes. But you gave me the very good answer.

ACTRESS. Not yet.

GUARDSMAN [*horrified. Retreats left*]. No, no. What! When you went away from me so quick! With no word!

ACTRESS. I didn't mean to hurt you. I should have said to you as calmly, as honestly as I now say it, that I could never, never, never deceive my husband. I beg your pardon for it.

GUARDSMAN. For being true to him.

ACTRESS. No—for not telling you at once.

GUARDSMAN. So, now the time has come—I will make the confession myself. I have never in all my life love any woman but you. I tell you this because you must know what sort of man I am, and I give you my best word of honor that I stand before you just so pure as you stand before me.

ACTRESS. It means so much to you.

GUARDSMAN. Forgive me if, a moment ago, I thought it might be otherwise. But now I lay my broken hopes humbly at your feet.

ACTRESS. You will find consolation.

GUARDSMAN. A woman always say that.

ACTRESS. My poor friend.

GUARDSMAN. Permit me to kiss your hand.

ACTRESS. My dear friend.

GUARDSMAN [*about to throw off his disguise*]. Now it is no longer necessary for me to disguise my love.

[*There is a knocking at the door right.*]

ACTRESS. Some one is knocking.

GUARDSMAN. Yes.

[*The CRITIC comes in.*]

CRITIC [*at door*]. May I?

ACTRESS [*assenting*]. Oh, Bernhard.

[*CRITIC crosses to ACTRESS and kisses hand.*]

CRITIC. Are you enjoying the opera?

[*He stands to right of her, between her and GUARDSMAN.*]

ACTRESS. May I introduce Prince Wassily Samsonov? My old friend, Dr. Bernhard.

GUARDSMAN [*in pretended awe*]. Dr. Bernhard, the critic.

ACTRESS. Yes, this is he.

GUARDSMAN. I always read what you write.

CRITIC. Thanks. And indeed—Yes, indeed, if I am not mistaken—and I do not think that I am mistaken—it seems to me that I have already had the pleasure of meeting the Prince.

ACTRESS. Oh, really!

CRITIC [*crosses to GUARDSMAN*]. Yes, yes, I wouldn't want to be too sure about it, but it does seem to me as if we have met somewhere.

GUARDSMAN. Maybe so.

CRITIC. Yes, I know we met at the home of a very beautiful woman, not so very long ago.

GUARDSMAN. Oh, did we?

CRITIC. In the home of a very beautiful woman, with whom you were doubtless more successful than I.

GUARDSMAN. Oh!

CRITIC. Don't be so modest.

GUARDSMAN. Things are not always just what they look at.

CRITIC. Nothing is settled as yet. The affair is—nothing is decided.

GUARDSMAN. No.

ACTRESS. Oh, have you many such undecided affairs?

GUARDSMAN. No, no.

CRITIC. Come now, this one affair does exist.

ACTRESS. Affairs?

GUARDSMAN. *Da, da.* This one—this single little one.

ACTRESS. Then there is one.

GUARDSMAN. *Huren.* What does it matter?

ACTRESS [*outraged*]. What does it matter? What does it matter? You really don't suppose that I'm interested in your love affairs. You really don't dare to assume that I—oh—

[*She breaks off and goes into box.*]

GUARDSMAN. I'm the happiest man in the world.

CRITIC. She hasn't recognized you.

GUARDSMAN. Can any one recognize me?

CRITIC. I did.

GUARDSMAN. No, no. She hasn't recognized me. If she has, that would be terrible, then everything I have done would be useless. Oh, no, she hasn't a suspicion. Why, she said things to me that she's never said before.

CRITIC. Then everything is all right.

GUARDSMAN. You know once this afternoon I was frightened. I was afraid she wouldn't resist me—Samsonov, Samsonov. But now to see her conquer her feeling for me—Samsonov, Samsonov, to see her crush it oh, that means more than just hap-

piness, my friend, no, that means peace of mind.

CRITIC. She is true to you.

GUARDSMAN. True. There is no doubt of it, and a woman who can be true to her husband when I am the lover will be true always.

CRITIC. Congratulations. Excellent. Then you are sure.

GUARDSMAN. Sure, I'll prove it to you. I shall stop at nothing. I will make love to her so violently that she will throw me out of the box.

CRITIC. But—

GUARDSMAN. And then when she speaks those precious words, "Leave me forever," then off with my wig and mustache, and I will press my little one to me. [*Embraces CRITIC, who throws him off.*] And then, my friend, we will have a champagne supper, such as you have never had before.

CRITIC. I understand. Congratulations. Splendid. Splendid.

ACTRESS [*returns to anteroom*]. Do you know, Bernhard, it is perfectly preposterous how conceited he is.

GUARDSMAN. I?

ACTRESS. Yes, you. A moment ago I happened to speak to you ironically about your affairs—and you looked at me—with a look—as if you thought your shady love affairs could possibly mean anything to me.

GUARDSMAN. Have I suggest so?

ACTRESS [*excitedly*]. Yes, I sit there, listen to the music and cannot hear a single note, because I am so ashamed of myself—not ashamed of myself but that you should have been able to make me so nervous. It's anything but pleasant. You surely don't believe that I am interested in your affairs with other women.

GUARDSMAN. I do believe it, and I

believe so strong that I would give everything in the world for one look from your eyes.

ACTRESS. Well, Bernhard, what do you say to my conquest? It's rather nice, isn't it?

CRITIC. Well, what do you expect, when you are the lady?

GUARDSMAN. I have been most correct in my behavior so far and therefore the presence of this doctor—doctor—

ACTRESS. Dr. Bernhard.

GUARDSMAN. Dr. Bernhard will not prevent me from saying before him as a witness that there is nothing I would not do, no woman, no carrière, no happiness whatever that would not be absolutely nothing to me if you—if you—

[*He kneels, the ACTRESS goes to him.*]

ACTRESS. If I—?

GUARDSMAN. You know what—I would say.

ACTRESS. I know, I know. But I want to hear you say it.

GUARDSMAN. Hear what? What do you want to hear?

ACTRESS. I want to hear the end of that long sentence—that there is no woman in the world—oh, what do I want to hear! I want to hear you say you love me.

GUARDSMAN [*almost reels against the side of the anteroom*]. Oh, dear God.

ACTRESS. Say it. We may never see each other again. Why are you staring at my old friend like that? [*Turns to the CRITIC at whom the husband had been staring.*] Do you care for me?

CRITIC. Surely—surely.

ACTRESS [*nestling against him*]. You are my best friend, my one

friend in all the world, my father, my mother, my brother. I have never had a secret from you, and I have none now. Even if there were anything between us—but—but there is not and I hope you know it—

GUARDSMAN. No, no.

ACTRESS. Even if there were I would tell him . . . I would confess to him as I have been confessing to the poor fellow for eight years.

[*Buries head.*]

CRITIC [*indignant*]. Oh, see here now . . . you little cat.

ACTRESS [*very stubborn*]. I don't care. . . . You can believe whatever you like. This man, whom I met the first time at six o'clock this afternoon . . . dares . . . just because . . . because he misconstrued a word, a gesture of mine and believed me jealous—and that's what annoys me—what tortures me—and I would—I would like— [*Drops the CRITIC's hand, speaks in another tone.*] What do you say, Bernhard? I'm behaving very badly, aren't I? But I don't care about anything now; this man may believe what he likes—but I confess to you, Bernhard that—dear Bernhard—this man, this man—

GUARDSMAN. Oh, please, I beg of you—

CRITIC. How dare you interrupt the lady when she is honoring me with her confidence?

GUARDSMAN. Marie.

CRITIC. How dare you call the lady by her first name?

GUARDSMAN. How dare you speak to me so?

CRITIC [*turns and bows to him*]. I am at your service, but I cannot allow you to interrupt me now.

[*Returns to her and puts his arm about her.*]

ACTRESS. Bernhard, he doesn't understand. Bernhard—look at him. He is no beauty—but at last—at last a man who has no ringing voice, a man who, thank God, is neither intelligent, nor brilliant,—nor melancholy, nor sentimental—a man whose brain is neither sentimental nor perverse. Bernhard, this simple, honest, stupid—he comes here and he doesn't know how to behave—but, dear old friend—at last—after all these years—at last a MAN.

[*She breaks down and goes to box.*]

CRITIC. Yes. Control yourself. Congratulations.

GUARDSMAN. Then I will—

CRITIC. You will do nothing but behave like a man; and you will, I hope, appreciate the frankness of this lady, this genius whose conduct is not to be measured— [*He breaks off this strain when ACTRESS has reëntered box.*] It looks bad, my friend, she's in love with you. I am afraid that our little champagne supper is—

GUARDSMAN. Go away. Go away.

CRITIC. You have my sympathy, poor fellow.

GUARDSMAN. Go away.

CRITIC. I know. You are afraid she will fall on your neck, in my presence. But if I do go, something worse may happen. You will not be able to control yourself—you will seduce your own wife.

GUARDSMAN. Go away.

CRITIC. You have caught yourself in your own trap. Don't deceive yourself. But—

GUARDSMAN. What?

CRITIC. If you behave awkwardly or stupidly to disillusion her you will be a coward. If you should tell her who you are now how will you ever

know? You've got to see it through.

GUARDSMAN. Yes, I'll see it through.

CRITIC. How?

GUARDSMAN. I will ask her if I may come to-morrow afternoon at five. Then I will know.

CRITIC. Too late. Your wife is deceiving you before your very eyes.

GUARDSMAN. She's only intending to deceive me. She'll not deceive me until to-morrow.

CRITIC. Poor fellow.

GUARDSMAN. Pity the husband but congratulate me.

CRITIC. You.

GUARDSMAN. If she kisses me as she has never kissed me, maybe it will not be the deceived husband her kiss awakens but—God forgive me—the victorious soldier. . . . No, no, come in to-morrow at four.

[*CRITIC exits into box as ACTRESS comes out again.*]

ACTRESS. Prince, do you realize what life has done to us? As for me, I shall do what I must do, but do you realize that you have acted like a school-boy? Men have killed themselves for me. But no man has ever forced me to say the things I have just said to you. I do not know what is happening to me. You do not know what is happening to you.

GUARDSMAN. No, you do not know what is happening to me.

ACTRESS. But now—

[*Gets closer.*]

GUARDSMAN. Now.

ACTRESS. Now.

GUARDSMAN. But now.

ACTRESS. Well, say something, do something, be something.

GUARDSMAN. Be what, be what?

ACTRESS. You.

GUARDSMAN. Me?

ACTRESS. What is the matter? You were so ardent, so eager a moment ago and now, why are you awkward, stupid—

GUARDSMAN. You said yourself that I was stupid.

ACTRESS. Are you playing a game with me; are you afraid to find this turning into a serious affair? There will be no divorce—no scandal—I do not intend to become a princess.

GUARDSMAN. Madame—

ACTRESS. You should have known that I would burn with a great flame, once you set me alight.

[*He takes coat.*]

ACTRESS. And now you are afraid.

GUARDSMAN. I am mad. My hap-

piness has turned my head. I do love you.

ACTRESS. You do love me.

GUARDSMAN. I love you. I adore you. I worship you.

ACTRESS. Are you as happy as I?

GUARDSMAN. Yes—I am unspeakably happy. [*They kiss. Applause is heard outside as the first act of the opera ends. The doors open. MAMA and the CRITIC see them together. MAMA gasps. Whispering to ACTRESS.*] When shall I see you again?

BOTH TOGETHER. To-morrow. To-morrow at five.

[*GUARDSMAN goes out.*]

CRITIC [*coming to ACTRESS.*] What a splendid finale.

QUICK CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[*SCENE: The same drawing room as in Act One.*]

MAMA and the ACTRESS sit in the settee, right. MAMA is darning socks. The ACTRESS is to the right of her. LIESL is under the piano, dusting.]

MAMA. I told you to say ma'am. Why don't you do as I told you? Each time I tell you.

LIESL. Yes, ma'am.

ACTRESS [*interrupting*]. Liesl, Mama, I shall want tea for two in glasses, Russian tea.

LIESL. Yes, ma'am.

ACTRESS. If any one should ask for me—I am not at home,—I have a headache, I'm not receiving, I'm not at home and I won't be back this afternoon.

LIESL. Yes, madam.

ACTRESS. Of course, if the Prince comes.

LIESL. The Prince?

ACTRESS. Yes.

MAMA [*at the same time*]. The Prince who was here yesterday, you fool, don't you know the Prince yet? And don't forget to call me ma'am.

LIESL. Yes.

MAMA. *Je n'ai jamais vu dans toute ma vie un si beau et un si chic—*

ACTRESS. *Laissons ça, mama; ça va sans dire.* Liesl, go and get tea ready. Russian.

LIESL. Yes, ma'am.

MAMA [*looking at LIESL*]. *Elle l'aime déjà aussi.*

ACTRESS. *Pourquoi, "aussi."*

MAMA. *Mais, ma chère enfant, il ne faut pas que tu should try to hide*

it from your mama. I can still see without my lorgnette, Bebi, and your dear mama—

ACTRESS. That will do, Mama.

[*She goes to piano and plays the Chopin Nocturne—a pause.*]

MAMA. It's four o'clock—[*Rises.*]—and he won't be here until five; Bebi—I have still time to fix myself up a bit, because you never can tell, Bebi— [*Exits left. Bell rings. MAMA comes back muttering.*] Well, who can that be? Liesl's such a fool. If it's that Tillie Bergman and she wants to come in—she won't know how to keep her out. [*She goes out right to answer the door. LIESL enters with hand bag, and sets it center, MAMA enters with hand bag and sets it center, the concierge enters with trunk and sets it center. The ACTOR enters and stands on platform. MAMA exits left. As she goes off left.*] Now he's back again, the next thing they'll be asking me to shine his boots.

ACTRESS [*stops playing*]. Well—well—it's you.

ACTOR [*declaiming*].

"My coming then is unexpected?

My heart's hot impulse drove me to the deed.

For ancient Cyprus calls me, and I come.

The foe my sturdy fortress now doth threaten;

I come with faith and hope, high mounting;

Yes, I come with all sweet—"

ACTRESS. Oh, for heaven's sake, stop acting. What's brought you back so soon?

ACTOR. What's that? I return two whole days earlier, and all you have to say is "What's brought you back so soon?" Is that all your greeting? Your kiss, your embrace?

ACTRESS. You've been gone only one day and I was just beginning to forget your sarcasm and your nagging. But now it's beginning all over again.

ACTOR. If you want me to, I can go back to Olmutz.

ACTRESS [*crosses down and sits sofa left*]. Don't, don't! You are perfectly horrid.

ACTOR. That sounds more natural. When you speak to me so beautifully, so affectionately—I'll go of my own free will.

[*Gets bag.*]

ACTRESS. Well, obviously I'm curious to know why you've played only one of your three performances in Olmutz.

ACTOR. It's perfectly simple, my dear. This morning I received a telegram from our own theatre saying that Krauss was ill and that if he was not better by night, they would put on "Hamlet." You know perfectly well that when Krauss is ill in the morning, he is never quite himself by night, and that when I play Hamlet, there isn't even standing room—naturally—

ACTRESS [*crosses left*]. Thanks, thanks, that's enough. You can spare me the rest of the press notices.

ACTOR. Well—in short, here I am—with my sweet little wife.

ACTRESS. You're in a very good humor.

ACTOR. Aren't you?

ACTRESS. Oh, yes. I am in good humor, too.

ACTOR. Very well, then. I'm in good humor, you're in good humor, and everything is all right.

ACTRESS. Yes.

ACTOR. It's too late to go to the café.

ACTRESS. You're going to stay home?

ACTOR. Yes.

ACTRESS. Until it's time to go to the theatre?

ACTOR. Yes.

ACTRESS [*with a sigh*]. Oh, very well.

[*She starts out left.*]

ACTOR. Where are you going?

ACTRESS. Nowhere in particular.

[*She is about to go.*]

ACTOR [*goes up left of piano*]. Well, what did you do with yourself all last evening?

ACTRESS. Nothing.

ACTOR. Weren't you bored doing nothing?

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. You didn't go anywhere?

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. Weren't you going to the opera?

ACTRESS. Oh, yes. How silly of me. Of course I quite forgot. That's so. I did go.

ACTOR. Were you bored?

ACTRESS. So, so.

ACTOR. What was it?

ACTRESS. "Butterfly."

ACTOR. But I thought you liked it.

ACTRESS. I've heard it so many times.

ACTOR. Then you were bored.

ACTRESS. Hm! What is the matter with you?

ACTOR. Nothing, nothing. I suppose Bernhard dropped in during the evening as usual.

[*He sits on piano stool.*]

ACTRESS. Yes, he was there a little while.

ACTOR. Then you were alone most of the evening.

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. No.

ACTRESS. No, Mama was there.

ACTOR. Alone in the afternoon, alone in the evening. Nobody here?

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. Nobody at all.

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. You were all alone until evening.

ACTRESS. How queer you are. If I tell you that I was alone—I was alone.

ACTOR. Then you were alone here until you left for the theatre?

ACTRESS. Let me see. Bernhard was here—you said good-bye to him yourself. Then there was the man with the bill—but you were still here—of course.

ACTOR. There was no one else here?

ACTRESS. No one else? Wait a minute. [*Thinks it over.*] No.

ACTOR. I don't know but I thought the concierge said—what do I know—something about a soldier—

ACTRESS. Yes? If there was a soldier here it was probably Liesl's lover.

ACTOR. That may be—I thought it might have been some stranger . . . coming here.

ACTRESS. If there was a soldier here, he came to see Liesl. But we can ask her.

[*Turns to door.*]

ACTOR. Never mind that, my dear. I know Liesl. Not any too bright but with a word or two she'd confess the soldier came to see her—

ACTRESS. Would she?

ACTOR. Yes, she'd even swear to it.

ACTRESS. Why should she swear to it?

ACTOR. Because even if there had

been a soldier here and perhaps he had come to see you— [*She rises.*] I'm only joking, I'm only joking, our good loyal Liesl would know just what to say. [*ACTRESS moves toward door. The ACTOR stops her.*] Never mind calling her.

ACTRESS. And so, little by little, your harmless questions have turned into a regular cross-examination. I was quite happy at first; I was quite touched; I thought you were interested in how I spent the evening—and now it appears that you have been suspecting me. And with a soldier! Very nice, I must say.

ACTOR. Oh, please—

ACTRESS. You must be out of your mind.

ACTOR. Please, please!

ACTRESS. This is really too much—I want to know at once what is back of all this about a soldier. I will call Mama and Liesl—

ACTOR. Mama will tell the same lies as Liesl, and Liesl will tell the same lies as Mama, and there I'll be with three women trying to outdo each other lying to me.

ACTRESS. And now I insist that you tell me what you mean.

ACTOR. I don't mean anything.

ACTRESS. You've got to tell me what is in your mind and who put that sort of thing into your head.

ACTOR. No one. But nevertheless yesterday afternoon after I had left—there was a soldier here.

ACTRESS. What has that got to do with me?

ACTOR. Just wait, my dear, you'll find out soon enough. Let's go, step by step, in chronological order. Let us say—there was a soldier here; let us take for granted that Liesl has tearfully confessed he came to see her.

Only there are all sorts of soldiers.

ACTRESS. What are you driving at?

ACTOR. There are all sorts of soldiers, big soldiers, and little soldiers, soldiers in red and soldiers in blue, soldiers in caps of fur, and soldiers in shining helmets.

ACTRESS. It's a *fireman*, it's a fireman. The firemen wear helmets. It wasn't even a soldier. So I am supposed to have deceived you—and with a fireman?

ACTOR. A fireman?

ACTRESS. How do I know? Let's ask Liesl.

[*She starts to the door left.*]

ACTOR [*stopping her right of piano*]. Not you, my dear, I'll do it. I am curious to know whether she will guess that it was a fireman. [*He tries to open the door, up right. There is a little scream outside and he drags LIESL in by the hair.*] Oho, you've been listening, my girl—

LIESL. I was just coming in, sir—

ACTOR [*sadly*]. Then you've been listening? Then you know it was a fireman? Quite right, my girl—you're a good, faithful servant, you'll grow old in this house. Keep on listening— [*He puts her out again.*] I'll knock before I open next time, so that you won't hurt your nose. [*Returns to center.*] So—it was the nightingale and not the lark; it was a fireman, and not a Guardsman.

ACTRESS. A Guardsman? A Guardsman? Now, what does that mean?

ACTOR. Nothing. You were alone here at home, then you dressed and went to the opera with Mama, box No. 4, first tier.

ACTRESS. I see. . . . I see. . . .

So, you've paid some one ten gulden to spy on me.

ACTOR. Twenty gulden, possibly.

ACTRESS. Just throwing your money away. Very well, that was where we sat.

ACTOR. You didn't exactly sit in the box!

ACTRESS. Oh, didn't we?

ACTOR. No, you spent the greater part of the first act in the anteroom.

ACTRESS. Then you acknowledge openly that this is no mere questioning, but an inquisition?

ACTOR. If you wish—I will acknowledge it.

ACTRESS. And you expect me to answer your ridiculous questions?

ACTOR. Yes, I do.

ACTRESS [*sits sofa*]. Very well, for once you'll be right. I will answer them. Let us begin.

ACTOR [*sitting on trunk*]. Where did you say your seats were last night?

ACTRESS. First tier, box 4.

ACTOR. Right, or left?

ACTRESS. Right.

ACTOR. Were you there before the opera began?

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. No, you came in during the first act.

ACTRESS. Yes.

ACTOR. And you took off your evening wrap.

ACTRESS. Oh, did I? What an extraordinary thing for me to do!

ACTOR. Yes, you took off your evening wrap, the one I gave you for your thirtieth birthday.

ACTRESS. The twenty-ninth.

ACTOR. Thirty.

ACTRESS. Twenty-nine.

ACTOR. Thirty.

ACTRESS. Twenty-nine.

ACTOR. Well, it doesn't matter.

ACTRESS. It does matter.

ACTOR. The twenty-ninth, then.

ACTRESS. That is better.

ACTOR. And a few minutes later an automobile drove up.

ACTRESS. That doesn't concern me.

ACTOR. An officer of the Russian Guards got out of the automobile. Isn't that so?

ACTRESS. I don't know—it might have been, how should I know?

ACTOR. The Guardsman hurried up to the first tier and went straight to your box.

ACTRESS. That may be.

ACTOR. He sent his card in to you.

ACTRESS. That is not true.

ACTOR. Mrs. Spengler, the usher, says that it is.

ACTRESS. Mrs. Spengler, the usher, is lying.

ACTOR. I'll send for her.

ACTRESS. Then she will repeat her lie here.

ACTOR. Well, but we don't need Mrs. Spengler—just listen a minute. At seventeen minutes of nine you introduced Mama to the Guardsman who was there in your box.

ACTRESS. Did I?

ACTOR. Then Mama left you alone till the end of the act. Later dear Mama came in again, was startled and went hastily back to her seat. What startled Mama?

[MAMA comes in from left.]

ACTRESS. Here she is. She can tell you herself.

MAMA. Anything the matter?

ACTOR. Aha, Mama, now you think I'm going to question you as to whether there was any one in the box yesterday and you will cover yourself with glory by lying to me one

hundred and fifty times without stopping for breath. Isn't that right, dearest Mama? [*MAMA crosses to him.*] But I shan't ask you a single question. You've been getting your ear greasy at the keyhole all for nothing. [*Chucks her chin.*] But wait a minute, I don't want you to go away without one little lie to your credit—tell me what startled you so.

MAMA. I suddenly thought of you.

[*Crosses to door right.*]

ACTOR. Oh, oh, oh,—look out, Mama, don't open the door too suddenly, Liesl is listening at the keyhole.

MAMA. Thanks. [*Calling off.*] Look out, Liesl, I'm coming through.

[*She opens the door very carefully and goes out. There is a pause.*]

ACTOR. So Bernhard called on you in your box?

ACTRESS. Yes.

ACTOR. Did you introduce him to some one?

ACTRESS. There was no one there to whom I could introduce him.

ACTOR. And suppose Bernhard were to come in at this moment?

ACTRESS. If there was no one in the box, then Bernhard will say there was no one there.

ACTOR. But if there was some one—?

ACTRESS. Then Bernhard will look at me first, and without so much as the quiver of an eyelash on my part, he will know that he is to say there was no one there.

ACTOR. Then, if Bernhard looks at you first—then there *was* some one there.

ACTRESS. He will look at me anyway as soon as he comes in—even before you ask him anything.

ACTOR. And if I go to meet him? If I question him when you are not there, how can he look at you then?

ACTRESS. Then he will have looked at me this morning.

ACTOR. And what if I questioned him last evening?

ACTRESS. Then he will have looked at me day before yesterday, and to spare yourself further trouble, he looked at me ten years ago, and ever since then, he has always known exactly what he was expected to say.

ACTOR. And if nevertheless he should come in here right now and say that there was a Guardsman in the box last night?

ACTRESS. Then I would know that you had told him just what to say.

ACTOR. I told him what to say! Oh, I see, then if he says anything *against* you, his testimony is worthless?

ACTRESS. If you think him capable of lying for my sake, I have perfect right to think him capable of lying for yours. Have you anything better to offer?

ACTOR. Yes.

ACTRESS. Then all this—all this is not merely a joke?

ACTOR. No—it is not a joke.

ACTRESS. And you really—seriously—thought that while you were slaving away, earning the money—that I was entertaining soldiers.

ACTOR. Oh, my dear—entertaining soldiers.

ACTRESS. That I—I who gave up her freedom, her whole life for your sake, that I should—while you were away, be entertaining soldiers.

ACTOR. I didn't say that you were entertaining soldiers.

ACTRESS. What did you say then? You said something much worse.

And what are you doing now? You're thinking that I have deceived you.

ACTOR. Oh, for heaven's sake, don't get so excited.

ACTRESS. And even if it were the truth, this lie—oh, I'm sure it was some of that Tillie Bergman's insinuations—even if it were true—how can you deny that I have given you my young and precious life?

[*Weeps.*]

ACTOR. But, my dear—

ACTRESS [*weeping*]. How could you do that to me?

ACTOR. This is really—

ACTRESS. You're killing my very soul.

ACTOR. Oh, my dear—what nonsense—

ACTRESS. I can't stand it any longer—no—I feel that—that all is over between us.

ACTOR [*goes to her and sits right of her*]. Don't say such things—you know how madly I love you.

ACTRESS. And yet you suspect me?

ACTOR. I do not suspect you.

ACTRESS. You believe lies about me.

ACTOR. No—no, I don't believe anything wrong about you.

ACTRESS. You're not saying that because you really believe—but only because you know that I won't stay with you a minute longer if you go on torturing me like this. I must go away.

ACTOR [*gets on knees*]. I'm not torturing you, I promise you, my darling, that I will never torture you again. Don't go away.

ACTRESS [*rises*]. I'm going away—I'm going away.

ACTOR. No! No! Don't go! Stay with me!

ACTRESS. Tell me as if you really meant it—from your very heart, that you do not believe these malicious lies.

ACTOR. I do not believe them.

ACTRESS. Did you say that with all your heart? You mean it honestly?

ACTOR. With all my heart—honestly.

ACTRESS. You love me and trust me?

ACTOR. I love you and trust you.

ACTRESS. It was all lies and slander.

ACTOR. It was all lies and slander.

ACTRESS. I was alone with Mama and I thought of your beautiful, ardent eyes—and I longed for you and wanted you with me—I loved you.

ACTOR [*buries face in her lap*]. My darling.

ACTRESS. How I must love you to be able to forgive this. I do forgive you.

ACTOR. You are my one love, forever and ever.

[*A pause.*]

ACTRESS. And now tell me, who slandered me?

ACTOR [*bashfully*]. I cannot tell you.

ACTRESS. Do you love me?

ACTOR. I love you.

[*Kisses her hand.*]

ACTRESS. And you believe in me?

ACTOR. I believe in you. [*She presses her handkerchief to her eyes.*] Forgive me—I'm so—so in love with you—that—why are you crying?

ACTRESS. Ah—if I could only tell you why I am crying—

[*She goes out right. Actor remains on knees, then sits back on heels.*]

CRITIC [*enters up right*]. Well,

it's to-morrow afternoon. What are you doing there?

ACTOR. Never mind.

CRITIC. What's the matter?

ACTOR. I'm believing that I wasn't with her last night.

CRITIC. What?

ACTOR. I'm believing what she said: that I wasn't with her last night.

CRITIC [*laughs*]. Are you? Ho, ho!

ACTOR. Yes. And if I had confronted her with you, you would have lied, too.

CRITIC. Quite so.

ACTOR. I could prove nothing against her—unless I revealed myself to her—

CRITIC. Well, why didn't you?

ACTOR. Because I never realized before how much she loved me—if I had told her what I had done she never would have forgiven me. I was frightened—and so—well—there was nothing left for me to say but that I believed her.

CRITIC. Extraordinary—

ACTOR. Oh, please—what's so extraordinary about it? I just *said* I believed her. No disgrace about that!

CRITIC. Perhaps you're right—yes, my boy—perhaps after all you were really not there—perhaps that *is* the truth—is there anything you can't believe if it's necessary?

ACTOR [*rises*]. Never mind about that. I've got control of myself now.

CRITIC. Have you? Well, what are you going to do now?

ACTOR. Yes. Now comes the moment when her lying is not going to help her any.

CRITIC [*coming down from platform*]. That is the moment I don't want to miss.

ACTOR. No, that's a scene I can't

play before an audience. Go away, go away. Come back later. Then we will all know.

CRITIC. Will we? What about our champagne supper?

[*CRITIC exits. ACTRESS comes in from left with a smelling salts bottle in her hand. She is dressed in a different tea-gown.*]

ACTRESS. You're still here?

ACTOR. Why should I have gone away?

ACTRESS [*inhaling from the smelling salts bottle*]. I thought I heard the door close— [*Pause.*] If you men only understood your wives—you'd go out now.

ACTOR. Are you expecting some one?

ACTRESS [*turns right*]. What a funny question.

ACTOR. Then why should I go out?

ACTRESS. Do go out for a little while—go to the café—take a walk—even if only for half an hour. Can't you understand? After this dreadful scene I'm a wreck—I am so nervous.

ACTOR. You want to get rid of me?

ACTRESS. Yes.

ACTOR. Very well, my love. To show you how considerate I am of your nerves, and to show you I know you haven't put that on for me, I'll go.

ACTRESS [*becoming hysterical*]. Oh, I see, I see. Then I'm expecting some one? The Guardsman possibly. I've given him a rendezvous? Here in my own apartment! [*Shouting.*] Will this never end?

ACTOR. Oh, don't begin that again. I'm going. I'll go just as soon as I've

unpacked my things for to-night. [*She takes up a novel and lies back on the sofa to read it.*] That's right. Relax, relax. [*He kneels behind the open trunk, the top of which hides him from her and begins to change to the GUARDSMAN's costume and make-up.*] It's bad enough not to have been able to keep my engagement at Olmutz for Krauss's sake. For once they arrange the repertoire so that I have three evenings free and then it occurs to Krauss to get sick. I doubt if he's any sicker than I am.

ACTRESS. Probably not.

ACTOR. You know he's getting thirty-six thousand a year now.

ACTRESS. And yet he's up to his ears in debt.

ACTOR. Everything he owns is mortgaged. He's a card fiend.

ACTRESS. He loses a lot at the races, too.

ACTOR. Yes, the way he plunges it's no wonder he can't get along with thirty-six thousand a year. One ought to be able to live on that very decently.

ACTRESS. Not very luxuriously.

ACTOR. Why not? What can a bachelor like him need for rent? At most, four thousand.

ACTRESS. Four thousand.

ACTOR. Very well, that's four thousand.

ACTRESS [*very much bored*]. Four thousand.

ACTOR. Then there's his clothes. What he needs for clothes, shoes, ties—on the stage and off—he ought to be able to get easily for eight hundred a month—that makes—[*he multiplies*—nine thousand, six hundred a year, altogether sixteen thousand.

ACTRESS [*as before*]. Sixteen thousand.

[*Lies down.*]

ACTOR. Then there is his underwear and linen, food, light and heat.

ACTRESS. Light and heat—yes—

ACTOR. On a liberal estimate—

ACTRESS. On a liberal estimate.

ACTOR. On a *very* liberal estimate, fourteen thousand, that makes thirty thousand. If we add six thousand for cigars alone, there's your thirty-six thousand. Where's the poverty in that?

[*He has taken wig and mustache from a box, and smooths the wig carefully.*]

ACTRESS. I didn't say anything about poverty . . . I said luxury.

ACTOR. One could live very well in the suburbs—

ACTRESS. Suburbs?

ACTOR. Don't sneer at the suburbs. It's only here that people are afraid of distances. In Berlin everybody lives outside the town. It's only a matter of time before the city reaches the suburbs and the suburb's got to go further out, and the city catches up to the suburbs again and then the suburb's got to move out again. Why, it's perfectly delightful at Schoenbrunn. You can't call Schoenbrunn a suburb. It has such an aristocratic atmosphere. [*He is finished with his disguise and begins to assume the GUARDSMAN's accent.*] The refined, dignified quiet atmosphere, the *court* and *court life* give the whole place a distinction. [*The clock strikes five and he rises from behind the trunk—the GUARDSMAN again. In Russian accent.*] Exactly five o'clock. His majesty himself could not be more punctual.

[*The ACTRESS looks at him.*

There is a pause. Suddenly a smile brightens her face. She takes on the tone and manner which she had when with the GUARDSMAN, and speaks with artless ease.]

ACTRESS. Good afternoon, Prince. [*She points to his former place.*] I began to think you were not coming.

ACTOR. Yes?

ACTRESS. How was the ball at the Palace last night? That affected conversation must be terribly boring. Everything is so restrained. Were you there long?

ACTOR [*in his own voice*]. What are you talking about?

ACTRESS. What?

ACTOR. What's all this mean? Are you trying out a part—are you acting?

ACTRESS [*sitting up*]. No, my dear, you are doing the acting. Why, you're even in costume.

ACTOR. Yes, I am, and I hope you realize why—instead of begging my forgiveness—now that you're exposed—instead of realizing that the moment has come when even your lies are of no avail—you are—you are—what does this mean? Doesn't *this* make everything clear?

[*Looks down at himself.*]

ACTRESS. Why, yes.

ACTOR. Well—then what are you doing?

ACTRESS. What am I doing? I'm going on with our little comedy from where we left off last night—the comedy that I've been playing for your sake since yesterday afternoon—If you wish, we can keep it up—but I fancy we have had enough of it by now.

ACTOR. What are you saying?

ACTRESS. You heard me perfectly well.

ACTOR. You mean—you mean you've been acting—ever since yesterday afternoon?

ACTRESS. Yes.

ACTOR. And you mean to say—Great Heavens—you mean to say now—that you recognized me at once?

ACTRESS. I not only mean to say it—I do say it. And not only do I say it, but it is true.

ACTOR. Oh, that would be terrible, if at the moment that you are caught, you escape.

ACTRESS [*calmly*]. You came in at that door yesterday at exactly sixteen minutes past six. At seventeen minutes past six, I had recognized you. At eighteen minutes past six, I was wondering whether I should laugh in your face—and at nineteen minutes past six I had decided to play the comedy to the end.

ACTOR. That is not true.

ACTRESS. You poor fellow—you trust yourself to play a difficult part sufficiently well to deceive even me—and yet you don't trust me to play a much easier one—even though—

ACTOR. Even though—

ACTRESS. Even though my acting ability is fully equal to yours—

ACTOR. Tut, tut, tut—

ACTRESS. Better, possibly. If not even—

ACTOR. Tut, tut, tut—we won't go into that. There are other matters. But if we should go into it—if we do begin to make comparisons, there isn't an actor in Europe who can touch my Romeo. You are a good Camille, my dear, but you must pardon me if I say I've seen better.

ACTRESS [*rises in cold rage. Crosses.*] You've seen a better Camille? Oh, you mean Duse—good, I agree to that.

ACTOR [*mockingly*]. Sarah wasn't exactly bad—either.

ACTRESS. Sarah? Sarah wasn't bad?

ACTOR. Although a certain critic, a dear friend of yours, wrote that you were better.

ACTRESS. Sarah was better than I? And you say that now—now, for the first time—after keeping it from me all these years?

ACTOR. Well, I thought that while you appreciated my art, it was my duty to appreciate yours!

ACTRESS. I appreciate your art! You think I've seen no better Romeo just because I never said so? I won't tell you yet, I won't tell you the name of the man who was better than you. I'll just tell you where I saw him. Do you know where I saw a better Romeo than you? In a stock company in Schmatz!

ACTOR. I have just one thing to ask of you—please don't drag my art into this discussion. I'm not discussing your acting.

ACTRESS. Yes, you are. If you can play the Guardsman so well that I believe in him, why couldn't I play the woman who believed in the Guardsman well enough for you to believe in my belief.

ACTOR. Because I simply could not be recognized—whatever you may say.

LIESL [*enters up right*]. Please—please, there's a man outside.

ACTRESS. What does he want?

LIESL. I don't know, but he's got a bill.

ACTOR. Tell him to go.

[*LIESL comes to door to tell CREDITOR to go, but he steps in, beaming.*]

CREDITOR. Good afternoon, good

afternoon. You know really I hate to disturb a great artist like yourself, but couldn't you let me have just a little bit on account? The whole thing's only four hundred and sixty kronen.

ACTOR [*in GUARDSMAN's tone*]. Artist. Artist. Who do you take me for?

CREDITOR. He will have his little joke.

ACTOR. Joke. Joke. Don't you understand?

CREDITOR. For twenty years now, I've been calling on you gentlemen of the theatre collecting money for Weinlovitz. Excuse me, sir, your own mother might not know you, your own wife might not know you, and you could put on all the uniforms, and wigs, and whiskers in the world, and as long as you owe me money I would know you. [*Pause. ACTOR pays him and CREDITOR starts out. He halts.*] Now look here, sir, why go to the trouble of all this fancy dress for a rotten four hundred and sixty kronen. It wasn't worth it.

ACTRESS. There you are, my dear.

ACTOR. What?

ACTRESS. Why, even a tradesman.

ACTOR. Of course he would recognize me. I haven't got my boots on. It's broad daylight here and it was dark yesterday—and darker in the box. And suppose he did recognize me—you did not. Oh, no, my dear, that doesn't mean that you recognized me. Not by any manner of means.

MAMA [*enters right, mop and pail in hand.*] Oh, I beg your pardon for appearing in this dress. I did not know you were here, Prince, we did not expect you until after five o'clock, did we, Bebi? But you're so aristocratically punctual, Prince—you arrive so exactly on the hour—I don't quite

know what to say. I think I'll go scrub the floors.

ACTOR. Get out, you dirty-faced hag of hell. Get out, get out.

[MAMA dashes out.]

ACTRESS. Why, even Mama knew who you were.

ACTOR. I don't care. I don't care. You didn't, you didn't. Prove it to me. How did I give myself away?

ACTRESS [*crosses right and thinks*]. Well, let me see. Oh, yes. You gave yourself away when you praised your own cigarettes. No one else will smoke them.

ACTOR. That doesn't explain anything. That doesn't mean anything.

ACTRESS. And there are other things. Your kiss—but I really mean this seriously. You couldn't disguise your kiss—it was so—so entirely your own—it was impossible not to recognize it.

ACTOR. Yes—I was afraid you recognized my kiss.

ACTRESS. And then your eyes. What was it I told you the day that you first told me you loved me? What was it I told you about your eyes?

ACTOR. That the look in my eyes—

ACTRESS. That sweet, warm, sad look.

ACTOR. *That* betrayed me!

ACTRESS. Yes. You're looking at me like that now.

ACTOR. I don't want to.

ACTRESS. Oh, if every man who wears a uniform were such a hero as you.

ACTOR. So I am to believe that you recognized me the very first minute?

ACTRESS. The very first moment. You owe that to your peace of mind. Don't say "if" or "but"—I warn you that if you do not believe me now, I

have really nothing more to offer. This is the only—[*Suddenly.*—and besides it's really true.

ACTOR. Then why didn't you tell me from the beginning?

ACTRESS. Because I wanted you to play the comedy out to the end. I certainly didn't think you'd lack the courage to go through with it. [*Rises.*] I didn't think that you'd rob us of that beautiful night.

ACTOR [*on his knees*]. Then you do love me?

ACTRESS. And you will never put me to the test again?

ACTOR. Never again.

ACTRESS. And you love me?

ACTOR. I am so in love with you. Why are you crying?

ACTRESS. Now I can tell you why I am crying—because you love me so—and because I am just a bit ashamed of myself.

[*She goes to piano and plays Chopin. The CRITIC enters.*]

CRITIC. On your knees again. What are you dressed up like that for?

ACTOR. Bernhard, I myself was the Guardsman.

CRITIC [*exchanges glances with ACTRESS*]. You were?

ACTOR. And would you believe it, even though I played the Guardsman, she recognized me from the beginning.

CRITIC. Did she?

ACTOR. You look as though you didn't believe it.

CRITIC [*crosses right, looking at ACTRESS; then to ACTOR*]. Of course she recognized you.

ACTOR. I wouldn't be surprised if she'd told you all about it.

CRITIC [*looks at ACTRESS; they*

laugh]. , Why, of course she told me. Tell me, will you do me a great favor?

[CRITIC *sits in the armchair left.*]

ACTOR. Yes.

CRITIC. Take off that costume—you look rather ridiculous in it.

[ACTOR *takes off costume and sits in settee right.*]

ACTOR. I'd look even more ridiculous if she hadn't recognized me.

[MAMA *enters complacently from lower right entrance, stepping over costumes tossed behind settee by ACTOR.*]

ACTRESS. Mama, call Liesl and get these costumes out of the way.

◆ THE GUARDSMAN

MAMA [*shouting*]. Liesl! [LIESL *enters from right upper entrance.*] Liesl, help me get these costumes into this trunk. [LIESL *sets to work, picking up the scattered costumes.* MAMA *holds up GUARDSMAN costumes to ACTOR.*] Are you going to wear this to-night?

ACTOR [*shouting*]. No. Why does she annoy me like that? Day in, day out—

[MAMA *talks back to him angrily, LIESL begins chattering and the curtain falls on the same scene with which the play began.*]

MEDIUM SLOW CURTAIN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.
THE TALE OF THE WOLF

Translated by
MELVILLE BAKER

First produced in America as "The Phantom Rival" by
David Belasco
October 12, 1914

CHARACTERS

DR. EUGEN KELEMEN
VILMA, *his wife*
PETERL, *their son*
GEORG SZABO
THE COUNTESS
LT. MIKHAL
LT. ZAGON
MRS. RITTER, *Vilma's mother*
THE SECRETARY
THE GOVERNESS
THE PARLOR MAID
THE COOK
MIEZCHEN
THE COUNTESS' ATTENDANT
THE HEAD WAITER
THE FIRST WAITER
THE SECOND WAITER
THE THIRD WAITER
THE BUS BOY
FIRST FOOTMAN
SECOND FOOTMAN
THIRD FOOTMAN
FOURTH FOOTMAN
MUSICIANS

SCENES

- ACT I. *A small dining room in a fashionable hotel.*
ACT II. Scene 1: *The library of Dr. Kelemen's apartment.*
Scene 2: *A hall in the palace of the Countess.*
ACT III. *Same as Act Two, Scene One.*

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *The dining room of a fashionable hotel. ZAGON and MIKHAL sit at a table near the wall. There are three bottles of wine on the table. They talk very quietly. There are no other guests in the room. There is a short pause after the curtain rises.*]

ZAGON. Women—beautiful women—everywhere—in the street car—in the theatre—getting out of taxis—wherever you go—

MIKHAL. Don't—you're breaking my heart.

ZAGON. So many beautiful women—and Saturday we go back to the garrison.

MIKHAL. Well— [*Lifting his glass.*] Here's to happiness.

ZAGON [*lifting his glass*]. Here's to happiness. [*He drinks.*] Waiter!

WAITER. Yes, sir.

ZAGON. Have you any Mumm's, Cordon Rouge, Drapeau Americain?

[*BUS BOY crosses to the right.*]

FIRST WAITER. Yes, sir.

ZAGON. I don't mean the ordinary Cordon Rouge—the bottle with the little American flag on it.

HEAD WAITER. Sorry, sir, we haven't that. How would some Cliquot extra dry, with the yellow seal . . .

MIKHAL [*drawling*]. Ayala—extra dry?

HEAD WAITER [*turning to MIKHAL*]. I'm very sorry—

MIKHAL. Georges Goulet Grand Vin Brut, 1904?

HEAD WAITER. I'm very sorry—

MIKHAL. Saint Marceux Imperial, 1906?

HEAD WAITER. I'm very sorry—

MIKHAL. Perrier-Jouet Carte blanche, 1911? You're very sorry.

HEAD WAITER. Cliquot extra dry, yellow seal?

ZAGON. Bring it out!

HEAD WAITER [*turns and makes a little bow to ZAGON. The other waiters bow after him*]. At once, sir. [*To FIRST WAITER.*] Cliquot, yellow seal.

FIRST WAITER [*to BUS BOY*]. Cliquot, yellow seal.

BUS BOY. Cliquot, yellow seal.

THIRD WAITER. Cliquot, yellow seal.

FOURTH WAITER. Cliquot, yellow seal.

ZAGON. In the street car—at the theatre—getting out of taxis—

MIKHAL. Everywhere—beautiful women— [*ZAGON sighs. A pause.*] Well, to go on—George goes after this girl, and pretty soon he has her where he wants her, do you see?

[*Pay waiter enters with yellow seal, hands it to FIRST WAITER and serves.*]

ZAGON. I know—and then the husband—

MIKHAL. No—no—not her husband— Will you let me tell this story? It was not her husband—

ZAGON. Sorry— Go on— Who was it?

MIKHAL. No. You finish the story. You know so much about it. Go on yourself.

ZAGON. Oh—go on, go on.

MIKHAL. No.

ZAGON. Well, here's to you.

MIKHAL. And you!

[*They drink.*]

ZAGON. I hear Ali's got a Spanish girl.

MIKHAL. Oterita.

ZAGON. Oterita!

[*He snaps his fingers in imitation of the castanet and stamps his feet—Da-DUM.*]

MIKHAL. Oterita.

ZAGON [*singing and snapping fingers as castanets*]. Oterita—Oterita—

[*HEAD WAITER appears left, hangs KELEMEN's hat and coat on rack—VILMA and KELEMEN enter, HEAD WAITER passes them to table right.*]

HEAD WAITER. The table over here, sir?

ZAGON [*singing*]. Oterita—

KELEMEN [*seeing soldiers*]. No.

VILMA. Why not? It will do very well.

KELEMEN. No— It'll be in a draught. [*Turns his back on officers and motions VILMA to sit at table on left.*] We'll sit here.

ZAGON [*KELEMEN sits during the following*]. You went to his place? They say he has two hundred acres.

VILMA. You might wait for me to sit down, my dear.

KELEMEN. I didn't, you see.

VILMA [*appeasingly*]. Eugen—

KELEMEN. The menu, please.

FIRST WAITER [*handing him menu*]. Eggs Cardinal—eggs Rothschild, eggs Metternich, cold salmon with green sauce—or—

KELEMEN. I'll do the ordering.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

KELEMEN. What would you like, dear? Eggs Cardinal, eggs Rothschild, eggs Metternich—cold salmon with green sauce—

VILMA. I don't want anything. I am not hungry.

KELEMEN. You're not hungry?

VILMA. No, I don't want anything.

KELEMEN [*handing back the menu*]. Later—madame does not wish anything now.

[*HEAD WAITER exits left. FIRST*

WAITER exits right. The BUS

Boy takes his place.]

ZAGON [*singing*]. Oterita—

KELEMEN. Two beers. Of course if you are determined to sulk—

VILMA. But—

KELEMEN. And let the waiter know that you don't want to eat because your husband has taken your appetite away—

VILMA. Poor Eugen—you get so nervous when you're tired.

KELEMEN. Do you think it makes me any less nervous to have you play the abused wife—in front of the waiter?

VILMA [*appeasingly*]. You're quite right, dear. Forgive me if I have annoyed you. [*Pause.*] Eugen—what is it now? [*Boy enters with beer.*] In the taxi you had quite calmed down—now you're beginning all over again. It's getting to be a little too much—

KELEMEN [*to BUS Boy*]. Tell the waiter to bring us two cold salmon—without the green sauce.

BUS BOY. Yes, sir.

[*Exits.*]

KELEMEN. When I say that I don't want a table next to two intoxicated Hussars, you needn't ask me, right in front of the waiter, why I don't. Nor say that the table will do very well. With the waiter there I can't explain that a table next to two drunken soldiers will not do at all. At least not for me—even if you—

VILMA. Ah—we are getting on—Now it's strange officers—two of them at once. I thought it was still Stephan Balsay.

KELEMEN. It is Stephan Balsay—that's why I suspect the officers.

VILMA. Dearest Eugen—I suppose I should be very proud to have you love me so much—but—

KELEMEN. But—

VILMA. It's a little too much—a great deal too much—

KELEMEN. My dear, I trust you implicitly. I know you are a self-respecting woman with no romantic foolishness about you, thank God. But I have a right to be anxious when I see these woman hunters sniffing about you.

VILMA. Woman hunters?

KELEMEN. Because I can't compete with them.

VILMA. Do you need to?

[*She takes hold of his hand.*]

KELEMEN. I'm not clever like them—I can't make clever remarks—or tell risqué stories—people don't listen to me at a dinner party.

VILMA. Oho!

KELEMEN. I don't dance, I—

VILMA. I never insisted on your dancing.

KELEMEN. Because you knew I'd only make you ridiculous.

VILMA. I've never thought anything of the kind.

KELEMEN. Oh, I don't deceive myself—I know I can't be anything more than a good provider. [*Enter FIRST WAITER followed by BUS BOY. Serves cold salmon.* KELEMEN, *without any change of tone.*] Let go of my hand!

[*HEAD WAITER enters left.*]

VILMA. Ooh—what a brute!

KELEMEN. Let go, I tell you!

VILMA [*while the waiter serves them*]. What time do we go to the Countess?

KELEMEN. Not before half past eleven. We can have a bite to eat, then I'll work for an hour at home. I've ordered the car for eleven.

[*FIRST WAITER and BUS BOY exit after serving.* *HEAD WAITER crosses slowly to right, then exits.*]

VILMA. Isn't that too early?

KELEMEN. No. We'll put the boy to bed and then you can dress.

VILMA. You have it all planned! Think what it means to you to have an orderly, domestic soul like me for a wife instead of a temperamental, frivolous—

KELEMEN [*puts down his fork and turns nervously to VILMA*]. What? What do you mean by that?

VILMA. Why did you call attention to those Hussars?

KELEMEN. Why?

VILMA. If you hadn't pointed them out to me I shouldn't have noticed them. Why did you make me think of them?

KELEMEN. I make you think of them! That's good.

VILMA. Conceited men repel me—you know that. Particularly when they're soldiers. And yet you keep pointing them out to me.

KELEMEN. I know—My—my case is pathological. I could write an article about my ailment for the "Pathological Review" that would astonish you. But that doesn't make it any better. The question is, what am I going to do about it?

VILMA. Cure yourself of it, Eugen.

KELEMEN. I'll begin the cure tomorrow.

VILMA. Oh, that sarcastic tone—

KELEMEN. Now, listen to me, my dear. I admit that I'm just a jealous fool—but you won't admit that I admit it—that I can stand outside of myself and—

VILMA. Don't do that—you'll only get involved again. Just as you did about Stephan Balsay.

KELEMEN. That was different. Didn't I see how he sat next to you, devouring you with his eyes—and how he looked at me? Oh, I was a Stephan Balsay once—before I married you. I used to say: "Here comes your husband."

VILMA. Why do you think I talked with him at all?

KELEMEN. I'm sure I don't know.

VILMA. You know very well. On account of the Bishop. You want that lease from the Bishop and Balsay is the Bishop's attorney. All these years I've avoided men on your account—just this once I show some interest in Stephan Balsay. And you talk about his devouring me with his eyes—and his looking at you and his saying "Here comes your husband." Oh, Eugen, if you knew how you tried my patience!

KELEMEN. Your patience? So that's it. Very well, then—now we can talk frankly. Answer me this, why am I going to the Countess' reception to-night?

VILMA. I know, I know.

KELEMEN. Answer me.

VILMA. Please, we are in public—try to control yourself.

KELEMEN. Why am I going to the Countess' reception to-night?

VILMA. Go on, dear, eat your supper—you're absolutely right.

KELEMEN. And you may as well

drop that motherly tone—or I won't take another bite.

VILMA [*resigned*]. Well, what is it? What am I supposed to answer? Why are you going to the Countess' reception to-night? You're going to the Countess' reception because—

KELEMEN. I'll tell you why I'm going. I can see you don't want to admit the real reason.

VILMA. Oh, you can see that?

KELEMEN. Yes, I can. We're going to the reception because the Countess is the Bishop's sister. And because the Attaché is coming from Paris to be at the reception and the Countess and the Attaché will together persuade their brother the Bishop to lease those four thousand acres to me. And why do I want those four thousand acres?

VILMA. Darling, I know.

KELEMEN. Why do I want those four thousand acres? Because next month we will sublet the land at an advance of 240,000 kronen. Half of which goes to Lewicky and half to me—120,000 kronen. And what do I want of 120,000 kronen?

VILMA. Hush—not so loud—you'll be overheard—

KELEMEN [*suddenly dropping his voice*]. What do I want of 120,000 kronen when we can live comfortably on our income of 30,000?

VILMA. You're thinking of our child.

KELEMEN. You see, you know nothing about it—I'm not thinking of the child. He'll have to make his own way. My father never left me anything.

VILMA. How can you talk that way?

KELEMEN. Because I mean it. I

want the money for you—and for no one else.

VILMA [*lowering her eyes*]. I know you do.

KELEMEN. I've told you a hundred times—I'm not brilliant, not good looking, not romantic. I can't make passionate love to my wife, I can't thrill her with my burning ardor so that her eyes shine—and her pulse jumps to a hundred and forty a minute. But I will give my wife—my dear little wife—a few hundred thousand kronen—two years more and it will be a million—a million for my wife—my darling. I must give her something—my life is nothing—my stupid, humdrum life is no use to a woman. So she shall have a million—a million, my child—now you've heard my declaration of love and now you know why I am going to the Countess' reception—*not* to hear the famous baritone from America—

VILMA [*moved*]. I'm going to put my fork down and get up and kiss you—right on the mouth.

KELEMEN. Wait till you get your million. And in the meantime don't sit so close to Stephan Balsay.

VILMA. You child—

KELEMEN [*gruffly*]. Child!

[*He eats.*]

VILMA. Did I sit close to him?

KELEMEN. Very close.

[*Pause.*]

VILMA [*her hand on his arm*]. He sat close to me.

KELEMEN. It's all the same.

[*Pause.*]

ZAGON [*looking at VILMA*]. Here's to women!

MIKHAL. And plenty of them.

[*They drink.* KELEMEN raises

his head nervously. Turns and looks at officers.]

VILMA [*quickly, to attract his attention*]. Half past eleven— [KELEMEN turns to VILMA.] Won't that be too late?

KELEMEN. No. [*Turns to officers again.*] The Attaché's train doesn't get in till eleven. He's the only one I want to see. I can stand missing the scene from "Don Giovanni." I'm not going for enjoyment's sake.

VILMA. Nor I, either.

KELEMEN [*ironically*]. Oh, you're not! Whenever you're among people, you're looked at—and when you're being looked at you're enjoying yourself.

VILMA [*sighing*]. What did Dr. Lewicky write from Odenburg?

KELEMEN. Nothing.

VILMA. Didn't you get a letter from him?

KELEMEN. Then you must know what he wrote.

VILMA. I don't read other people's letters.

KELEMEN [*puts down his fork*]. Just what are you insinuating?

VILMA [*hastily*]. Nothing—nothing at all. I'm not insinuating anything. Forgive me—it just slipped out.

KELEMEN. Just because once I opened one of your letters—

VILMA. I've forgotten all about it.

KELEMEN. I never denied it. So there's no need for your insinuations. It was in a man's handwriting, so I opened it. I opened it because I was suspicious. How was I to know it was from your dentist? I never tried to conceal it—I told you frankly what I had done.

VILMA. Please believe me, I wasn't insinuating.

KELEMEN. I'll believe you. What was it you asked me?

VILMA. What did Dr. Lewicky say in his letter?

KELEMEN [*word for word as if he were reciting*]. He advised me again to go to the reception because the Attaché is to be in town only this evening and he is the only person who can influence the Bishop. The Bishop worships his younger brother and when the Countess wants anything of the Bishop she goes to the Attaché first. I must by all means speak with the Attaché. "With my very best regards to your charming wife, I remain, yours sincerely, Karl Lewicky. Odenburg, February 4, 1912." Now do you know?

VILMA. Many thanks.

KELEMEN. Don't mention it.

VILMA. No, not to you—I was thanking Dr. Lewicky.

KELEMEN. Please don't be funny.

VILMA. You *are* nervous.

KELEMEN. Nervous—you say that as if it were a crime. Let me tell you it's a disease—like a toothache—the only difference is that—

VILMA. That your tooth hurts me.

KELEMEN. There, you see—I've just a practical mind—and you have imagination. You're clever, witty—I'm matter-of-fact and dull. Yes, my dear, I know how far above me you are. That is my misfortune. Say something clever—make fun of me—make me feel ridiculous.

VILMA. Tell me, does Dr. Lewicky think you can get the lease?

KELEMEN. You treat me like a child—you see that I am nervous so you talk of the lease. Yes, he thinks I can.

VILMA. What does the Countess say?

KELEMEN [*irritated*]. That it's a delicate situation because there are so many bidders. But if the Attaché puts in a word for us the lease is ours.

[FIRST WAITER *enters right, crosses to left.*]

VILMA. Isn't Lewicky coming on?

KELEMEN. No, he will send one of his representatives if anything develops. Is that all you want to know?

VILMA [*emotionally*]. You say I treat you like a child?

KELEMEN [*embarrassed*]. Now, please—you needn't be sentimental.

VILMA. How else could I treat you—you're so like a child, a sweet, stubborn, pathetic, bad little boy.

KELEMEN. Stop it.

VILMA. And if you knew how sweet and naïve you are when you talk of your millions—but only I can know that. If we were at home now— [*Catch in her throat.*] Oh, you are such a dear, dear person—and your face *is* like a little boy's. And it makes me so proud to think you are going to give me a million—and—and— [*Puts down fork.*] No, I can't eat another bite. And if you say another word I'll cry.

KELEMEN [*turns around to WAITER—with forced calmness*]. Waiter, bring us some fruit.

WAITER [*who is behind KELEMEN's back*]. Would you like peaches, grapes—or perhaps some pears, sir?

KELEMEN [*thinking of something else*]. Yes.

WAITER [*waits—then softly*]. Which would you like, sir?

KELEMEN. Tell him what you want, dear.

VILMA [*takes his hand*]. Nothing, thank you.

KELEMEN [*withdraws his hand*]. Please—have something.

VILMA. Pears—pears—pears!

[*Exit WAITER right.*]

KELEMEN [*who thinks WAITER is still behind him*]. Pears. [*After a pause he turns and sees WAITER has left.* VILMA laughs. Turns angrily to VILMA.] That's it—laugh!

VILMA [*smiling*]. There—there—but don't look so glum. If you'll smile I won't bother you for the millions—I won't need it.

KELEMEN. No—I know how much you do need it.

VILMA. But I don't.

KELEMEN. You don't know women.

VILMA. Perhaps. But I know myself.

KELEMEN. To-day — now — you don't need it. But I know what becomes of these domestic wives when they approach the thirties. That's why I must make sure of you before then. And because I can't do it any other way I'm going to depend on the million.

VILMA. Make sure of me? I don't want to leave you.

KELEMEN. You'd go to-night.

VILMA. Not even to-morrow.

KELEMEN. Then the day after to-morrow.

VILMA. If I say no—you'll say the day after that—and so on. We could sit here for a thousand years playing that game.

KELEMEN. If some one doesn't come in the meantime.

VILMA. Who?

KELEMEN [*insinuatingly*]. Some one.

VILMA. Are you going to begin all over again?

KELEMEN. Yes.

VILMA. Some one?

KELEMEN. Some one who has everything that I lack. Not a man with a brief case and spectacles and a headful of stupid law—but some one with youth and strength—or charm and fascination. I am simply a husband who knows it.

VILMA. Knows what?

KELEMEN. That he is a husband. If you want a word to sum up everything that a woman finds unsatisfactory in marriage, that is it: husband. And so if some one comes—

VILMA. You are thinking of some one in particular?

KELEMEN. No, no.

VILMA. Who is it?

KELEMEN. God knows—any one—a stranger—who doesn't even know that he is coming.

VILMA. You are thinking of some one in particular!

KELEMEN. No—just whoever it is who is coming.

VILMA. Let him come—I don't want him.

KELEMEN. Not now—but if he comes to-morrow or the next day, you will want him—

VILMA. You harp on this one idea so much I'm beginning to think there's something back of it. What is it?

KELEMEN. Nothing.

VILMA. You're leading up to something.

KELEMEN. No—it's only another symptom of my disease.

VILMA. And will it go on this way—will it get worse? [*Almost crying.*] Shall we separate?

KELEMEN. I don't know.

VILMA. What in heaven's name do you want me to do? Cover up my face—cut off my hair—

[HEAD WAITER *enters and stands at right.*]

KELEMEN. Oh, I know—I am to blame. I ought to have married a nice little girl from the provinces—who would have looked up to me as if I were a demi-god—or married my cook. Not a brilliant, beautiful, clever— But if you hadn't been what you are I wouldn't have married you.

[*Eats.*]

VILMA. Well—

KELEMEN. Shall we end the discussion now?

VILMA. Please do.

KELEMEN. But just one thing more and we will let it rest. Understand this. When I am at home with you and the boy—then I have a few happy hours—then everything is fine and right. But when we go out among people—in the streets—the theatre—the restaurants—then I begin to suffer the tortures of the damned. When I see the way men look at you, and then whisper to each other and smile, then I curse the day that I was born, for at such times the knowledge that you are a decent, self-respecting woman doesn't help me—not then— My grandfather used to tell us of the peasant uprising in '48. The peasants, armed with scythes and axes, were ravaging the country. My grandfather, who had foreseen the trouble, had converted all his property into gold and when it came he fled one night with all his wealth in a little bag. He told us again and again of that flight. How he had gone along a dark forest trail, trembling at every rustle in the bushes. There is a sharp noise—his heart

stands still while he clutches his bag of gold. But it is only a breaking branch. Then he sees something—something coming out of the darkness between the trees. His heart is in his mouth— He stands listening— Some one is coming— [*He points and looks toward the entrance.*] Some one—

[SZABO *enters, his hat on.* KELEMEN *keeps repeating* "Some one is coming" *while his hand sinks slowly down; then he abruptly resumes eating.* SZABO, *seeing VILMA, is embarrassed.* He *awkwardly nods to her; she returns the nod briefly.* SZABO *crosses to the officers' table; there is an exchange of greetings.* ZAGON *seems to be an old friend; neither of the officers rises.* SZABO *sits abruptly at table opposite VILMA.*]

SZABO [*to soldiers*]. Hello.

ZAGON. Hello.

SZABO [*to WAITER*]. A menu, please.

[FIRST WAITER *enters with pears.*

HEAD WAITER *gives menu to* SZABO.]

VILMA. Why did you stop so suddenly?

KELEMEN. Can't you see— [*Swallows.*] I'm eating.

[*Pause.*]

VILMA [*with feigned interest*]. Well, go on—he sees some one coming.

KELEMEN. Well—then—oh, well, it was just one of grandfather's stories. But it has a certain similarity to—but you know without my—

VILMA. I only asked—because I was anxious for your poor grandfather's sake. Was there really some

one or was he just imagining?
[Pause after FIRST WAITER serves pears.] Did some one really appear?

KELEMEN. Yes, some one really appeared—and he bowed to you—and I didn't recognize him at all.

[Pause. FIRST WAITER crosses to table at right.]

SZABO [to WAITER]. Anything that's ready—but quickly—I'm hungry. [FIRST WAITER exits right.]

KELEMEN. Some one came and bowed to you and now he's talking loudly to attract your attention—and I don't recognize him.

VILMA [looking at SZABO]. Don't pay any attention to him.

KELEMEN. You're paying attention to him—you can't stop looking at him.

[Short pause. VILMA takes her eyes from SZABO and returns to her supper.]

KELEMEN. Who is he?

VILMA. If I knew his name I'd tell you. I only know that he's one of the young men who used to go to the dances in Odenburg—when I was a girl. I don't remember his name.

KELEMEN [looking at SZABO]. I remember his face.

VILMA. You—where did you ever see him?

KELEMEN. In your photo album—in a group picture. "The winners of the Odenburg Tennis Tournament" is written underneath it. You and Marie and two young men are in the picture—and one of the young men is that man there.

[FIRST WAITER enters, serves tomatoes.]

VILMA. It may be—but I have forgotten his name.

SZABO [to WAITER who has brought a dish]. What's that?

WAITER. Tomatoes.

SZABO. Take them back. I don't eat tomatoes. Bring me some cold chicken and a fruit salad.

WAITER. At once, sir.

KELEMEN. He doesn't eat tomatoes. Now do you remember him?

VILMA. Oh—Eugen—

KELEMEN. Think back a little. Who of the people who used to come to your house for lunch didn't eat tomatoes? No one could possibly forget a thing like that.

VILMA. I've known hundreds of people like that, danced with hundreds of them. How do you expect me to remember this one?

KELEMEN. Very well, very well.

[Eats.]

VILMA. Now I suppose you're convinced I know his name and won't tell it to you.

[Pause.]

KELEMEN [stops eating]. What was the name of the man who was going to marry you three years before I came?

VILMA. No one was going to marry me.

KELEMEN. Don't play with words—who was it who—

VILMA. No one.

KELEMEN. Who asked you to marry him.

VILMA. No one.

KELEMEN. Just now you asked me if I was thinking of some one in particular. In other words, you admitted that there was some one in particular I ought to be thinking of. And besides, Dr. Lewicky's wife told me that there was a young man who was in love with you—

VILMA. One! More than that.

KELEMEN. Splendid!

VILMA [*whispering fiercely*]. And you've kept that to yourself all this time!

KELEMEN. I would never have mentioned it if that man hadn't come in just now—the very man who stood next to you in the group picture—it's perfectly obvious he's the particular some one—if only from the way he greeted you.

VILMA. No, he's not the one—no one is. I never gave the slightest encouragement to any man. I never so much as flirted with any one. You know what kind of girl I was—I behaved just as I do as your wife.

KELEMEN. That man was in love with you seven years ago. You know his name and you're trying to keep it from me.

VILMA. I don't know it.

KELEMEN. That man there—
[*Looks at SZABO and discovers that he is watching VILMA from behind his menu. SZABO, caught by KELEMEN, quickly turns his glance away. Turning to VILMA.*] There—you see—

VILMA. What?

KELEMEN. The way he was looking at you—it speaks volumes. Don't you recognize him yet?

VILMA. No.

KELEMEN [*starting to get up*]. Shall I go and ask him his name?

VILMA. For heaven's sake, Eugen! You're not yourself. Do you want to insult a stranger?

KELEMEN [*sarcastic*]. He's no stranger.

VILMA. He is to me.

KELEMEN. You'd do much better to admit that he is the one—do you think I'll be angry over a schoolgirl affair?

VILMA. He is not the one. I haven't the slightest idea who he is.

ZAGON [*calling to SZABO*]. You staying here now, Georg?

SZABO. No, I just got in on the afternoon train.

KELEMEN. Do you hear that?

ZAGON. Here for long?

SZABO. Yes. Are you?

ZAGON. Going back to my garrison in Jaroslau Saturday.

[*Enter FIRST WAITER with cold chicken.*]

SZABO. Too bad. [*WAITER brings him a dish.*] That's better. Bring me a glass of beer.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

SZABO [*calling after the WAITER*]. Hey! Hey! Where's the fruit salad?

WAITER. At once, sir.

[*Starts to go.*]

SZABO. If it's not ready bring me some apple-sauce instead.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

[*Exits right.*]

KELEMEN. You see.

VILMA. See what? Because he came on the afternoon train must he have been my lover?

KELEMEN. I didn't say that at all. [*BUS BOY comes in with beer; serves SZABO.*] Only that his identity is no longer in doubt.

SZABO [*to ZAGON, impatiently*]. Terrible service—

VILMA. And if what you think is true—what then?

[*HEAD WAITER exits right. BUS BOY gets SZABO's hat, exits left.*]

ZAGON. You having apple-sauce?

KELEMEN. Nothing—nothing at all. That's why it's so silly of you to lie—and so suspicious—

VILMA. Suspicious? What do you mean by that?

SZABO. Yes, if they ever bring it.

KELEMEN. It makes me suspect that you loved him.

VILMA. And if I did love him?

KELEMEN. Ah—so he is the one.

VILMA. No, he isn't.

KELEMEN. But there is some one then?

VILMA. There's no one. [ZAGON *excuses himself from MIKHAL and goes over to SZABO's table with two glasses of champagne.*] I never loved any one. But if you keep this up much longer—oh, it's more than I can stand. One of your bad days takes years off my life.

ZAGON [*at SZABO's table*]. May I—

SZABO. Of course—sit down.

ZAGON [*sitting*]. Well, how goes it?

SZABO. So—so.

VILMA. Don't listen—they're noticing it.

KELEMEN. I'm not listening—they're shouting.

ZAGON. I suppose you left all the girls in tears back home.

SZABO. Why should they cry?

ZAGON. Because you were going away.

SZABO. Aw—

VILMA. Say something—so they won't think you're listening.

ZAGON. Don't be so modest. I'll bet they cried.

KELEMEN. The girls cried.

VILMA. Let's go home, Eugen. I can't stand this any longer.

ZAGON. But you needn't worry—there are plenty of women in the city, too.

SZABO [*distracted, not listening to ZAGON*]. Yes?

ZAGON. Come—own up. It's a woman that brought you here.

[HEAD WAITER *enters with apple-sauce.*]

SZABO. That may be true of you.

HEAD WAITER [*puts the apple-sauce down in front of VILMA*]. Madame ordered apple-sauce?

VILMA [*fluttered*]. No, no—not here.

KELEMEN [*after a pause—pointing to SZABO's table*]. That gentleman over there.

[HEAD WAITER *serves SZABO.*]

SZABO. You Hussars are all alike. You let us civilians find a woman for you and then you take her from us.

ZAGON. Not always, my boy. A few weeks ago a civilian took one away from *me*. [SZABO *dishes out apple-sauce. Is watched by KELEMEN.*] I haven't got over it yet.

KELEMEN. He hasn't got over it yet.

SZABO. Married woman?

ZAGON. No.

SZABO. Did she get married?

[PAY WAITER *enters.*]

ZAGON. Mmmm.

SZABO. Tough luck—I know what it is.

KELEMEN. Don't miss a word of this.

VILMA. Aren't you ready to go home now?

KELEMEN. No!

VILMA. Won't you please come home?

KELEMEN. No.

VILMA [*to HEAD WAITER*]. The bill, please.

[HEAD WAITER *motions to PAY WAITER who crosses to table left.*]

ZAGON. Coming to the opera?

PAY WAITER [*to KELEMEN*]. The bill, sir.

KELEMEN. Not now—

HEAD WAITER. But, madame—

KELEMEN. Yes, yes—later.

ZAGON. Don't you know my friend? [MIKHAL rises.] Aurel Mikhal— [MIKHAL bows.] Great fellow. Why don't you come with us to the opera? [MIKHAL takes chair from his table and sits back of table right.] We have a box—and some girls.

SZABO. Thanks—but I can't. I've a lot to do.

ZAGON. Aha! Well, I won't say anything more.

SZABO. You still think it's a woman? No, I'm through with them.

ZAGON. Yes, yes, I know. I heard all about that.

SZABO. You heard nothing.

ZAGON. Oh, yes, I did—it's quite some time ago now.

[MIKHAL beckons WAITER and goes through business of paying check.]

KELEMEN. I suppose now we're to pay our bill and go—just when the play is beginning.

VILMA [almost in tears]. I'll go myself.

KELEMEN. You'll wait.

ZAGON. And you've been a woman hater since then? What was it happened? [Thinks back.] You were in love with some girl who—

SZABO. But—

ZAGON. Oh, I remember! Wait a minute—

SZABO [leans toward ZAGON]. Stephan.

KELEMEN [very excited]. Waiter—bring me a coffee.

HEAD WAITER. Yes, sir.

[Exits right.]

ZAGON [not understanding—loudly]. What?

[Leans toward SZABO. SZABO whispers in his ear. ZAGON looks toward VILMA but lowers his eyes to the table as SZABO continues his whispering.]

SZABO [a little louder]. Don't look at her now.

VILMA [very excited]. Peter! simply must get to bed. You know he can't go to sleep until you tell him a story. It's half past eight—he should have been asleep long ago.

KELEMEN [attempts to silence her with a gesture. Interrupts her on "been asleep"]. Don't talk. We'll sit here a little longer—quietly. Why must you have this sudden desire for conversation?

VILMA. You might at least try not to let them see you're listening.

KELEMEN. I'm sorry if it annoys you. Yes, I'm listening. Not that I expect to hear anything more—but I don't want to leave—yet.

[ZAGON looks at VILMA.]

SZABO [between his teeth]. Don't stare at her.

[Looks down.]

ZAGON. So—

[They bend their heads together again and continue whispering.]

KELEMEN. What are you afraid of?—I won't make a scene.

VILMA. Why should you?

KELEMEN. Why indeed? There's no occasion for one—unless he does or says anything.

ZAGON [in another and louder tone]. Did you know that Toni bought the Stoisle place?

SZABO. Not really! Stoisle has sold it?

ZAGON. I said that Toni bought it.

SZABO. For how much?

ZAGON. Eight hundred and fifty thousand kronen cash.

KELEMEN. They've changed the subject.

[FIRST WAITER *enters right with coffee and serves it to KELEMEN.*]

VILMA. They saw you were listening. I could die of shame.

KELEMEN. Because you know who he is—that's why you're ashamed.

SZABO. Where did he get all that money?

ZAGON. He has a rich wife and they just inherited 200,000. [*Purposely loud.*] And they have a rich aunt in Prague.

KELEMEN. Now, my darling, I can pay the bill—the play is over. [*Calls, "Bill, please."*] PAY WAITER *comes forward with check.* That's all I wanted to hear. So Toni has bought the Stoisle Estate. [*As KELEMEN names the items of his order the WAITERS make their appearance as if accidentally.*] Two cold salmon. [*THE FIRST WAITER appears.*] Two glasses of beer. [*The BUS BOY appears.*] One coffee.

HEAD WAITER [*makes a heavy line under the column of figures on the check, adds them, and then, without any expression, as if he always said it.*] No pears.

KELEMEN [*quickly*]. Oh, yes—two pears.

[HEAD WAITER *adds pears to check and puts it down on table. KELEMEN hands him a twenty kronen note.*]

HEAD WAITER. Thank you, sir.

[*Retires. The following dialogue whispered very fast.*]

VILMA. Now, I'm afraid to go with you.

KELEMEN. Do you want to stay?

VILMA. No, no—not for anything. But I know what will happen.

KELEMEN. Nothing will happen, if you'll admit he was the one you were in love with.

VILMA. Let's go, please. I can't keep from crying any longer.

[*Almost crying.*]

KELEMEN. You've nothing to cry about.

VILMA. You're torturing me to death.

KELEMEN. I'm not—I'm merely asking you to be frank.

VILMA. Shall I lie to you? Make up something?

KELEMEN. No, I'll recognize the truth.

[*VILMA breaks into tears.*]

KELEMEN. Waiter, get my things. [*Exit FIRST WAITER left. HEAD WAITER works to right center. VILMA has handkerchief to eyes.*] Turn the other way—he'll see you're crying. He might misunderstand that.

[*Rises. FIRST WAITER enters with coat and hat.*]

VILMA. What are you going to do?

KELEMEN. Don't worry about that— [*Puts on coat and hat and tips all WAITERS. VILMA starts.*] Bow to him.

VILMA. No.

[*Rises.*]

KELEMEN. So you're that intimate with him!

VILMA [*crying*]. What do you want me to do?

KELEMEN. Bow to him.

[*VILMA nods toward SZABO's table. SZABO half gets up and bows. ZAGON also rises a little—clicks heels together. VILMA goes slowly out. KELEMEN tips his hat to SZABO's table. SZABO and ZAGON acknowledge*

bow, but without rising. Then KELEMEN hastily turns and hurries after his wife who has reached the door. He takes her arm with comic haste and hurries out.]

WAITER [*by door—softly*]. Good evening, sir. Thank you, sir.

[FIRST WAITER, PAY WAITER, BUS BOY *exit right*. HEAD WAITER *stands back of table at left*.]

ZAGON. So that was the girl?

SZABO [*looking after them*]. That was the girl.

ZAGON. She was crying.

SZABO [*sadly*]. Yes.

ZAGON. Was that her husband?

SZABO. Probably. Oh!

[*Beckons to WAITER*.]

HEAD WAITER [*comes up*]. Sir?

SZABO. Do you know that couple?

HEAD WAITER. No, sir.

SZABO. Do they come here often?

HEAD WAITER. No, sir.

[*Pause*. HEAD WAITER *retires*.]

FIRST WAITER *exits left*.]

ZAGON. You haven't seen her for some time?

SZABO. Seven years.

ZAGON. She's pretty.

SZABO [*sighs*]. Yes.

ZAGON. What sort of a man is her husband?

SZABO. What's that to me?

[*Pause*.]

ZAGON. Well, good luck, old boy. [MIKHAL *hears this and gets up*.] Sure you won't come to the opera with us?

SZABO. No, thank you.

ZAGON. So long.

SZABO. So long.

[MIKHAL and SZABO *bow to each other. The two officers go single file to the door. Here they are handed their swords and caps by the FIRST WAITER and the BUS BOY. They put on their caps and then with much clanking of swords exeunt*.]

SZABO [*very sad*]. Waiter.

HEAD WAITER. Sir?

SZABO. Bottle of Pommery.

WAITER. Yes, sir.

[*Exits. He is heard calling, "Pommery!" The cry is repeated several times, growing more and more distant*.]

CURTAIN BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

ACT TWO

[SCENE I: *The library of KELEMEN's house.*

Half an hour later.

There is a lamp on table right, also a reading lamp on the desk. When the curtain goes up the stage is empty. The bell is heard outside. The GOVERNESS enters from nursery and the PARLOR MAID from the right. The GOVERNESS turns on switch. The table lamp goes on. She turns on desk lamp. KELEMEN and

VILMA are heard outside, their voices raised in altercation.]

KELEMEN. You did.

VILMA. I didn't.

KELEMEN. I say you did.

VILMA. At least you might have the decency—

KELEMEN. I've no time for decency. You're in the wrong and—

[*The PARLOR MAID exits left*.]

VILMA. I am not in the wrong.

And besides, a gentleman should have enough confidence in his wife not to make a scene over a school-girl affair.

[GOVERNESS *takes* VILMA's *hat and coat. Exits right, then returns.*]

KELEMEN [*crosses to right center*]. Never mind what a gentleman should do. [*To* GOVERNESS.] Is Peter asleep yet?

GOVERNESS. No, sir. He won't go to sleep without his good-night story.

KELEMEN. Well, I'll go in.

[GOVERNESS *crosses to nursery.*]

VILMA [*at left*]. Yes, do go and put him to sleep. Then maybe you'll calm down, yourself. I've had enough of this and I'm tired.

KELEMEN. You're right, you're right—that's more important—

VILMA [*sits at right of table at left*]. I can barely stand up—all this bickering. . . .

KELEMEN. Now, now.

VILMA. Go on. [KELEMEN *starts for nursery door.*] It will quiet you.

KELEMEN [*aggressively*]. What did you say?

VILMA. I said that it will quiet you to tell him a story.

KELEMEN [*crosses over right of table*]. It will take more than that to quiet me—it's not just my nerves that are upset.

VILMA. Then what is it?

KELEMEN [*crosses over right, behind table*]. The life I lead—everything— [*Breaking out again.*] I told you all that before—

VILMA. *Cette fille entend tout. Je n'en vois pas la nécessité.*

KELEMEN [*to* GOVERNESS]. If you will go back to the boy I will be in at once. [*To* VILMA *as* GOVERNESS *exits.*] You know what's wrong with

me. It's this mysterious man and the tomatoes he doesn't eat.

VILMA. Listen to me.

KELEMEN [*crosses back to center*]. I'm listening.

VILMA. Will you believe me?

KELEMEN. Yes.

VILMA [*crosses to* KELEMEN]. Will you be satisfied with the truth?

KELEMEN. Yes.

VILMA. Whatever it is?

KELEMEN. Whatever it is.

VILMA. And there will be no more questioning?

KELEMEN. No more.

VILMA. Well, then, he was one of my suitors. Three years before I knew you. Perhaps he was even in love with me. I have not seen him since, and I don't remember his name.

KELEMEN. So that's it. Well, in that case. . . .

VILMA. Do you believe me?

KELEMEN. I believe you!

VILMA. Satisfied?

KELEMEN. Yes.

VILMA. You will never bring it up again?

KELEMEN. Never.

VILMA. Your word of honor? Promise.

[KELEMEN *crosses to bedroom. They shake hands.*]

KELEMEN. You are a good wife. [VILMA *crosses to left.*] I promise nothing of the kind—I'm not satisfied at all.

VILMA. You are not?

KELEMEN. No.

VILMA. Very well, then, since you really want to be hurt—

KELEMEN. Well?

VILMA. It will be very painful.

KELEMEN. I don't care.

VILMA. His name is Georg.

[*Sits right at table at left.*]

KELEMEN. I know that. That's what they called him in the restaurant.

VILMA. Georg Szabo.

KELEMEN [*crosses to center*]. Did he love you?

VILMA. He loved me.

KELEMEN. Very much?

VILMA. No.

KELEMEN. Very much?

VILMA. A little.

KELEMEN. Very much?

VILMA. As much as one usually loves.

KELEMEN. Very much?

VILMA. People thought he was in love.

KELEMEN. Very much?

VILMA. More than the others.

KELEMEN. Very much?

VILMA. Very much.

[*Rises.*]

KELEMEN. Well—

VILMA [*crosses right. Sits. KELEMEN crosses left around and below desk then up to right of it. Shoves chair*]. Now he's happy because he's being hurt.

KELEMEN. And you—did you love him?

VILMA. Not in the least.

KELEMEN [*crosses to center*]. Did you love him?

VILMA. You know me better than to ask that.

KELEMEN. Did you love him?

VILMA. He might have thought I did.

KELEMEN. Did you love him?

VILMA. No.

KELEMEN. Well—you might as well have said yes in the first place.

[*Crosses left.*]

VILMA. Wasn't the first method simpler?

KELEMEN [*crosses to center*]. Did he propose?

VILMA. Yes. [*Pause.*] Now ask me if I married him.

KELEMEN. To whom was the proposal addressed?

VILMA. Uncle Felix—who told him very politely that his attentions were not welcome.

KELEMEN. He accepted that?

VILMA. Yes.

[*Rises. Crosses to right.*]

KELEMEN [*follows and catches her*]. When was the tennis tournament?

VILMA. There were lots of them.

KELEMEN. Was he a good player?

VILMA. Does that worry you, too? He was a fair player.

KELEMEN. Was he a good player?

VILMA [*crosses left*]. He won a cup.

KELEMEN. Was he a good player?

VILMA [*angrily*]. One of the best!

KELEMEN. Well, your uncle refused him once and for all?

VILMA [*sits right of table left*]. Once and for all.

[*The GOVERNESS enters.*]

KELEMEN [*starts*]. What did he say? [*To GOVERNESS.*] What is it?

GOVERNESS. Peterl is waiting for his father.

KELEMEN. I'm coming. [*The GOVERNESS stands waiting.*] I'm coming at once. Didn't you hear me?

GOVERNESS. Yes, sir.

[*Exits, closing door.*]

VILMA. We left off with your asking what he said.

KELEMEN. What did he say?

VILMA. He said nothing and left—went away.

[*She takes a key from her bag and dangles it from her finger.*]

KELEMEN. Where?

VILMA. Paris—America.

KELEMEN [*sits beside her*]. What's that key?

VILMA. A key.

KELEMEN [*thinks, looks at door at right*]. And that's all there was to it?

VILMA. That's all.

KELEMEN [*crosses to behind desk*]. Didn't he write you?

VILMA. No.

KELEMEN. Not a word?

VILMA. Not a syllable.

KELEMEN [*sits behind desk. More pleading than demanding*]. Show me the letter he wrote.

VILMA. He did not write.

KELEMEN [*rises. Goes to left of table*]. In your desk, the upper right hand compartment—are your old love letters. His must be there. [*Points finger*]. Where is the key to that drawer?

VILMA. Here. [*She hangs the key on the finger of his outstretched hand. KELEMEN crosses right and exits right. As if horrified*]. You are going to read that letter?

KELEMEN [*off stage*]. I certainly am.

VILMA. Don't look too long. It's on top.

[*KELEMEN enters right, takes out letter and crosses to VILMA, lays it on desk, also keys*].

KELEMEN. No.

[*Crosses right, sits*].

VILMA. Shall I read it?

KELEMEN. I'm not in the habit of reading letters which are not addressed to me.

VILMA. You will read this one.

KELEMEN. No. You read it aloud. I'll listen.

VILMA. You'll read it.

KELEMEN. No, not even if you ask me to.

[*He puts the letter on the table, rises, then crosses center. There is a long pause after which he goes and picks up the letter again, then lays it down suddenly and crosses to the window, then back to desk, and turns to VILMA who stares back at him without expression. After one or two false starts he finally picks up the letter and begins to read it after the fashion of the short-sighted. VILMA gets up slowly and reads over his shoulder*].

KELEMEN [*reading*]. "Dear Vilma: You had your Uncle Felix tell me that you couldn't be mine because you don't love me. You also had him tell me that this was the only reason for your refusal—that it was not because I am poor and have no prospects. Only because you don't love me you can't accept my proposal."

[*Interrupts the reading for a moment. Puts down the letter*].

VILMA [*playfully pushes his head down to the letter again*]. Go on.

KELEMEN. Must I?

VILMA. Yes.

[*Leans on his shoulder*].

KELEMEN [*reading*]. "I don't believe that. You love me and when I have gone away to make a name for myself you will show that you love me . . ." [*Speaking—half rises*]. So I was right after all. [*He turns toward VILMA. She, however, indicates by pointing to the letter, that he should continue reading. VILMA points to line. Reading*]. "By waiting for me and not marrying." [*Speaking*]. Or maybe you were right.

VILMA. Did I wait for him?

[*She thoughtfully walks away from him and sits on the sofa.*]

KELEMEN. I'll admit you didn't wait for him. [*Reading.*] "I'm going away from here out into the great world, but I shall come back. Perhaps as a famous soldier—perhaps as a great statesman—perhaps as a world-renowned artist—perhaps as only—[KELEMEN *turns page*—a poor servant who will come to beg you for work. My only request is, if you love me, wait for me. I shall come back for you."

[*With an ironical smile he looks at the letter.*]

VILMA. Well?

KELEMEN. Poor boy. [*Pointing to the letter as if he were a professor on the lecture platform.*] This letter might have come from the "Complete Letter-writer's Guide"—It is the typical letter of a young man from the provinces—quite unmistakable.

VILMA. I never thought much of it myself.

KELEMEN [*with letter in hand*]. That's the small-town's idea of a romantic hero. [*Looks at the letter again.*] A poor lawyer's clerk, with his mind made up to come back a famous soldier. I'd like to know where he got that idea.

VILMA. The poor boy.

KELEMEN [*pause as he continues to read letter*]. Ah—Napoleon—"a great statesman," prime minister at least. Prime Minister Georg Szabo. "A world-renowned artist." What could be simpler—you go away and then you come back—a world-renowned artist.

VILMA. What do you expect of a boy of that age?

KELEMEN. How could he be so stupid! That's a fine love letter, that is! Why, a love-sick servant girl could do better than that. Oh, it's too funny! [*Sits on the couch left of VILMA.*] But the end, that's not even funny. It's positively sickening—"or as a poor servant begging for work." How did he ever think of that?

VILMA. But he was only a boy.

KELEMEN. Soldier, statesman, artist—[*With comic tremulo.*]—or a poor servant. Oh, the romantic young fool. [*VILMA stands up suddenly as if she wanted to tear the letter from him, but she desists and instead goes and sits behind desk.*] How could he be so stupid? In love—I know that—but so stupid. A famous soldier or a poor servant—that's marvelous.

[*Laughs.*]

VILMA. What are you laughing at?

KELEMEN. I am not laughing. No, I am sorry for him, poor fellow. Did you see him in the restaurant—how he attacked that apple-sauce—your victorious leader of armies!

VILMA. Perhaps if he *had* succeeded—

KELEMEN [*burlesques*]. Then he would have come back for you.

VILMA. It's evident he stayed in a law office. Perhaps he didn't even get admitted to the Bar.

KELEMEN. He cut a poor enough figure to-night; he didn't look much like a great statesman. [*Holds his sides while he laughs.*] And he doesn't eat tomatoes.

[*Flops on the couch.*]

VILMA. Is that all you've got to say?

KELEMEN. No. Did he really go away?

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN. And you haven't seen him since?

VILMA. No.

KELEMEN. To-night was the first time?

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN. And when he came in—[*Burlesquing.*—]—didn't a voice cry out in your heart—"He has come; come to take me away."

VILMA. You needn't be so funny.

[*Crosses up to and by KELEMEN. He seizes her hand.*]

KELEMEN [*rises*]. No. [*Pause.*] Oh, my darling, forgive me. [*He pulls her down beside him.*] Everything is all right now—everything. [*GOVERNESS appears in the doorway. KELEMEN gets up.*] I am coming. [*The GOVERNESS exits.*] I feel like another man. [*Crosses to center door, drops letter in front of couch, and turns at the door, a little ashamed.*] Do you know, when he came into the restaurant to-night . . .

VILMA. Please—

KELEMEN [*laughs. His nervousness is entirely gone. He puts his arm around his wife. They remain so until the end of this scene.*]. He didn't give such a bad impression. }

VILMA. He looked like a clerk on a holiday.

KELEMEN. Well, perhaps he was a little overdressed for a Prime Minister.

VILMA. You can see that now.

KELEMEN. Everything is clear to me now. . . . And the world-renowned artist talked rather loudly—not quite in good taste. I feel sorry for him.

VILMA. I don't. There never was

anything to him. Such stupid people soon get over a broken heart. He's an out-and-out provincial.

KELEMEN [*in very good humor now*]. He might at least have come back as a poor servant.

VILMA. Oh, let's forget the letter. He thought it was fine enough, but you never would have written a letter like that.

KELEMEN. Never.

VILMA [*puts her arms around him*]. You dear, clever person. I am so happy that you've finally stopped worrying.

KELEMEN. Forgive me.

VILMA [*tenderly*]. You're a hard case, my dear—a hard case.

[*GOVERNESS enters with PETERL.*]

KELEMEN. I was, but now I am cured. [*VILMA starts to pick up PETERL.*] Take a little rest, sweet. You have a long evening before you—the reception, the concert, the ball. [*KELEMEN speaks in a hearty voice to the child. One feels that the story he is about to tell bores him because he has told it so many times.*] Not asleep yet?

PETERL. No.

GOVERNESS. He is waiting for his story.

KELEMEN. Have you said your prayers?

GOVERNESS. Yes, he was a good boy.

KELEMEN. Well, what shall I tell you about?

PETERL. About the wolf.

KELEMEN [*picks up PETERL, crosses right and sits*]. Again? I've told you about him every night for the last two weeks.

PETERL. But I've never heard its end, though.

KELEMEN. That's because you always go to sleep first.

PETERL. Please tell it again from the beginning.

KELEMEN. Well, then. Once upon a time there was a poor man who had a little white lamb.

PETERL. He lived at the end of the village.

KELEMEN. Yes, my boy. Way at the end of the village, in a tiny little house— And one night the poor man went to sleep, and forgot all about his little lamb outside in the garden, and there were lots of fierce wolves prowling around. Wolves with sharp teeth and red tongues.

PETERL. Yes.

KELEMEN. The poor man was fast asleep in his little house, when suddenly a wolf came down from the mountain. His eyes gleamed in the dark and he licked his lips as he crept along.

PETERL. Yes.

KELEMEN [*VILMA crosses to KELEMEN and stands behind him*]. As he came nearer the poor man slept on and dreamed. [*During the following, KELEMEN speaks more to VILMA as an allegory of their love.*] The poor man loved his little lamb more than anything else in the world—for it was the only thing he had to care for. [*He takes VILMA's hand.*] And whenever he thought of his little lamb he was frightened because he thought that some day a wolf might come—a wicked, hungry wolf—who would steal his little white lamb. And you couldn't blame him for thinking that with so many wolves in the forest. For what could the poor man do against them all?

PETERL. Yes. [*VILMA withdraws her hand from KELEMEN—kisses baby*

and slowly walks out of the room, and down to back of desk.] Why did mother go away?

VILMA. I am tired, dearest.

[*She stands at the end of the sofa in the living room.*]

KELEMEN [*turns with a sigh to the child*]. Mother doesn't like this story.

[*While KELEMEN goes on with the story VILMA surreptitiously picks up the letter and carries it to the desk, looking to see that KELEMEN is not watching. Standing up, she reads it, with the letter on the desk. Then she goes to the sofa, lies down, listens to the story awhile and then goes to sleep.*]

PETERL. And then?

KELEMEN. And then suddenly the wolf appears outside the garden. His eyes gleam like two red coals.

PETERL. Yes.

KELEMEN. The little lamb did not know what a wolf was. He only stared at him as he came nearer and he did not know that the wolf wanted to eat him. Finally the wolf came so near that the lamb could feel his hot breath. Then he *was* afraid. He went "Baa! Baa!" and ran around the house and pushed at the door. The wolf opened his jaws and began to roar—Grrrr—then he made a *tremendous jump* and—

GOVERNESS. Shhh!

KELEMEN. Has he gone to sleep?

GOVERNESS. Yes.

[*KELEMEN carries PETERL into the nursery and returns. Meanwhile the GOVERNESS has come into the living room and discovered that VILMA is asleep. The GOVERNESS closes the door to the nursery.*]

KELEMEN [*loudly*]. Another time he must—

GOVERNESS. Shh!

KELEMEN. What?

GOVERNESS. Mrs. Kelemen is asleep.

KELEMEN. The poor dear. [*He goes to VILMA and looks at her lovingly. Then he goes to the desk and searches among the papers.*] The story put her to sleep, too. But an hour's rest will do her good. You had better get her things ready for her and then wake her in about three-quarters of an hour.

GOVERNESS. At quarter of ten.

[*Piano is heard off stage.*]

KELEMEN. At quarter of ten. [*Looks at VILMA.*] How tired she looks.

GOVERNESS [*looking in direction of music*]. Oh, that girl upstairs. Always practicing at night.

KELEMEN. It's no matter.

GOVERNESS [*goes to the door*]. I'll go up and ask her—[*Starts left.*—to stop.

KELEMEN. No, let her go on. It may keep her asleep.

GOVERNESS. Quarter to ten, then.

KELEMEN. At a quarter of ten you can wake her. [*He takes some papers from his desk. Crosses to right.*] I'll be working in the library. Turn out the light. [*The GOVERNESS covers VILMA with a throw-over. Then extinguishes the light and exits left.*] A famous soldier—a great statesman—a world-renowned artist—[*With a comic sigh.*—or a poor servant. [*He smiles, turns out the table lamp and tiptoes toward the door. As he opens the door, the light streams into the room. He stands looking back at VILMA.*] The story put them both to sleep—both the children.

[*It is now dark on the stage and, except for the distant piano, quiet. The piano becomes louder and louder. It now seems to be played by four hands. Then a violin. Then many more violins take up the melody. Other orchestral instruments are added. The unaccompanied piano has become a complete orchestra.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

[*SCENE II: The lights come up suddenly, revealing a magnificent hall in the palace of Her Excellency the COUNTESS. The orchestra is visible up stage on the landing of the stairs; it is playing the waltz fortissimo. The stage is otherwise empty.*

Then suddenly VILMA rushes in from the left, screaming. She is dressed in an elaborate décolleté evening dress. After her come the COUNTESS MIEZCHEN, and the SECRETARY.]

VILMA. Let me go! Let me go! I've done nothing wrong!

[*She rushes up the steps; the SECRETARY hurries up to her and puts himself in her way. The COUNTESS attempts to quiet her.*]

COUNTESS [*very excited, in jerky sentences*]. Vilma . . . for heaven's sake! [*By this time she has come up to VILMA on the stairs.*] What in the name of heaven is it? [*Changing her tone to one of command—ad-*

dressing the SECRETARY.] Mr. Balin!
See that we are left alone.

SECRETARY. Yes, Your Excellency.

[Hurries up the steps and exits.]

COUNTESS *[leading VILMA right]*.
Sit down here, my dear. Miezchen!
[MIEZCHEN springs to attention.]
Run out and keep any one from looking in. *[MIEZCHEN exits.]* Now, tell me what has happened.

VILMA *[breathless]*. My husband—

COUNTESS. What about him?

VILMA. He burst into the room—where I was talking—

COUNTESS. With whom?

VILMA. With the Colonel. . . .

[Screams and runs up the stairs.]

COUNTESS. And . . . and . . . ?

[Hurries after her.]

VILMA. He'll kill me!

[Runs farther up the stairs.]

COUNTESS *brings her back.*

KELEMEN *at this moment rushes in from the left.*

KELEMEN. You can't get away!

[Rushes after VILMA, who tries to shield herself behind the

COUNTESS.]

VILMA *[retreating still further]*.
Save me, save me!

COUNTESS *[standing in his way]*.
What are you trying to do?

KELEMEN. Your Excellency, my profound apologies, but this is a question of my honor. *[To VILMA.]*
That officer—who was that soldier?

VILMA *[goes to center up the stairs]*. Who was that soldier? Eugen . . . Eugen . . . that officer was the famous soldier . . . you laughed at his letter . . . but now . . . after seven years he has come to take me away . . . as he wrote. He has come again as the victorious warrior.

KELEMEN. You have betrayed me!

[Rushes at her. VILMA, panic-stricken, runs up the stairs. She meets MIEZCHEN, who is just returning from right, and drags her out with her.]

COUNTESS *[puts herself in KELEMEN's way. KELEMEN crosses down to center]*. What are you trying to do? Have you lost your mind? What has happened?

KELEMEN. My wife has betrayed me!

COUNTESS. How? When? Where? Who?

KELEMEN. Here in your house.

COUNTESS. You must be calm. Tell me what has happened.

KELEMEN. In there—in the next room—all evening I noticed an officer prowling around her—he followed her—*[Shouts.]*—dogged her footsteps—

COUNTESS *[crosses right. Works down right center. Looks off left]*. Not so loud, not so loud . . . for heaven's sake!

KELEMEN *[follows]*. I watched . . . listened . . . never let them out of my sight . . . crept after them on tiptoe . . . until I finally surprised them . . . in the next room . . . locked in each other's arms . . . whispering. . . .

COUNTESS. Who?

KELEMEN. My wife and the officer. He had his arms round her, I could see quite clearly by the light from the next room . . . I burst in . . . my wife ran away . . .

[Enter MRS. RITTER, rushing down the stairs—tearfully.]

MRS. RITTER. What have you done to my daughter?

KELEMEN *[crosses left]*. Your daughter has betrayed me.

COUNTESS [*comes down*]. Not so loud.

MRS. RITTER. What do you mean?

KELEMEN. I caught her in a pitch dark room—with a soldier.

MRS. RITTER. That's a lie.

COUNTESS. Merciful God! This—in *my home*—at *my reception*. [MRS. RITTER *holds out her hands*.] I'll never live it down. No, my dear lady, never.

MRS. RITTER. Now, now, Your Excellency . . . he is probably mistaken.

KELEMEN. Mistaken—after I saw them with my own eyes! [*To Mrs. Ritter*.] And you be careful what you say—you're not much better yourself.

COUNTESS. Have mercy, I implore you.

[KELEMEN *starts up steps*. MRS. RITTER *stops him*.]

KELEMEN [*comes down steps*]. No. I won't kill her. I have a better punishment for her. She has betrayed me, wrecked my life— Well, here, to-night, publicly, before all your hundred and fifty guests, I will expose her—let the world know of her shame—know that she—

[KELEMEN *starts up steps again*. *Is stopped by Mrs. Ritter*.]

MRS. RITTER. Eugen!

COUNTESS. No, doctor, I think you will do nothing of the sort. First, you are going to quiet yourself. And then, you will walk slowly through all the rooms, with your wife on your arm. I shall arrange to have that . . . officer, go up to you and exchange a few friendly words with you—and then you will leave.

MRS. RITTER. Yes, yes.

[SECRETARY *enters left*.]

COUNTESS. And I am going to send for my brother.

MRS. RITTER. Yes, the Attaché.

COUNTESS [*to entering SECRETARY*]. Please ask my brother to meet me in the dining room. [*Turns up stage. Two LACKEYS enter from right and cross up steps. COUNTESS turning again to the SECRETARY*.] What have they there?

SECRETARY. Signor Malotti is now in his dressing-room. He asked for nine lemons. [*A look from COUNT-ESS*.] For his throat.

COUNTESS. I only hope he didn't hear anything.

SECRETARY. I should think not. The door is a very heavy one.

[*Exits*.]

KELEMEN. Countess.

COUNTESS. Please, doctor, do me the kindness to say nothing more. [*VILMA comes down the stairs, leaning on MIEZCHEN. The COUNTESS sees her, addresses herself to her, going slowly to meet her during speech*.] Take me for an example, my child. Be strong. God will help you. It is only the innocent victim who must suffer—only I . . . [*Commanding*.] Miezchen.

MIEZCHEN. Your Excellency?

COUNTESS. Take Mrs. Kelemen up to my dressing-room. See that her face and her hair show no traces of what has happened. Do that at once. Then bring her back here, where Dr. Kelemen will be waiting for her—quietly waiting for her. Won't you, doctor?

KELEMEN [*looking at Mrs. Ritter*]. Yes, Countess.

COUNTESS [*as MIEZCHEN and VILMA go off left*]. Now I must go out to my guests—to find out what they know—to try and save what is already lost. [*Goes up the stairs. Mrs. Ritter exits*.] My brother, the At-

taché, will ask the Colonel to meet you in the ballroom and exchange a few friendly words with you. The Colonel will do this—to save the honor of the widowed Countess Simandy—that I promise you. And now I am waiting for your answer.

KELEMEN. Countess, your wishes will be obeyed.

[*He bows.*]

COUNTESS. Then wait here for your wife. [KELEMEN bows.] Doctor Kelemen, you are a gentleman.

KELEMEN. Countess, I would prefer not to be.

COUNTESS. You can't help yourself. You are one. [KELEMEN bows.] I shall pray for the peace of your soul.

KELEMEN [*dryly*]. Thank you.

[COUNTESS exits. KELEMEN remains alone. He crosses left.

The SECRETARY enters. Two LACKEYS come out of the room right, occupied by SIGNOR MALOTTI.]

SECRETARY [*goes up to them. They stop*]. Were the nine lemons sufficient for Signor Malotti?

[*The two LACKEYS cross to SECRETARY.*]

LACKEY. Yes.

SECRETARY. Have three eggs prepared for Signor Malotti at once—but don't cook them—cool them in ice—like champagne—and take them to his dressing-room at once. He wants them for his throat.

LACKEY. Yes, sir.

[LACKEYS turn and exeunt.]

SECRETARY [*comes to the foot of the stairs. Ceremoniously to KELEMEN*]. His Excellency the Attaché begs Dr. Kelemen to have the kindness to await him here.

[*He bows. Goes to back of bench. KELEMEN crosses right*

and after a moment's pause walks nervously up and down. He goes toward the stairs and then returns down stage. He turns and is about to go up the stairs again when the COLONEL appears. The part of the COLONEL is played by the same actor who played SZABO—the same smooth-shaven face. They look at one another.]

COLONEL. I am at your disposal, Doctor.

KELEMEN. You have seduced my wife.

COLONEL. That's what I came for.

KELEMEN. What!

COLONEL. I came to—

KELEMEN. The details do not interest me. You were embracing my lawful wife in a pitch dark room. That you must pay for.

COLONEL. I await your pleasure.

KELEMEN. All that will be arranged in the usual manner. In the morning. But now we must enact, in order to save the good name of this house, a short and painful comedy.

COLONEL. I have heard nothing about that.

KELEMEN. You will be informed.

[*Starts right. Enter VILMA.*]

COLONEL. I am here now, if you wish anything.

KELEMEN. No—nothing.

VILMA. They told me that you were waiting. [COLONEL faces, bows and starts left.] That I should come. [To COLONEL.] No—stay. [COLONEL returns. To KELEMEN.] I am afraid to stay alone with you—and I wanted to tell you—in his presence. . . .

KELEMEN. That you love him.

VILMA. No, no. . . . I only wanted

to explain—and tell him to go away.

KELEMEN. You love him.

VILMA [*after a pause, first trembling—then very softly with growing passion. Her speech becomes almost ecstatic. Comes down the stairs.*

KELEMEN *steps backward, horror-stricken*]. Yes, I love him. I love this splendid, lonely soldier. I love him, if you must know the truth—and I cannot deny that I love him.

And I embrace the moment when I can finally open my tortured heart and loose the flood of passion that burns within it. I love this splendid, sad, glorious soldier who has come to take me away—as he promised in his letter—come from the field of honor—

COLONEL [*taking a step toward her*]. Vilma!

KELEMEN. It's not true, you don't love him.

VILMA. Yes, I do love him. And you must have seen it when he came in—you must have sensed when I lied about his name that I belonged to him—you must have known when I showed you his letter that I adored him and that he would come for me—my conquering warrior. You, you laughed at his letter—but now he is here!

KELEMEN. What are you saying? What do you want to do?

VILMA. He is here—my hero of a thousand battles—out of furthest India—he has come to claim me.

COLONEL. Africa, my love.

VILMA. And you laughed at him. I said nothing. I ignored your ridicule. How could you feel the fire that raged in my quiet housewife's heart? [*Suddenly to the COLONEL, with open arms.*] Do you love me?

COLONEL [*passionately*]. Need you

still ask? [*He opens his arms. VILMA rushes to him.*] You must have known it. Back there in the restaurant—you must have heard the blood pounding through my heart—You must have seen my knees knock together when I discovered you at another man's side—with your husband. Ah, Vilma, why didn't you wait?

[*They embrace.*]

KELEMEN. Here—before my very eyes—

VILMA. Because I was weak—because I thought I could forget you.

COLONEL [*they talk as if the husband were not present, so that VILMA's and KELEMEN's speeches are almost simultaneous*]. The sands of the desert are still red with my blood—blood that was shed for you. I did not eat. I did not drink—for your sake. I slept on bare boards.

VILMA. You dear.

COLONEL. So my sufferings continued as the months and years passed.

VILMA. And he laughed at you!

COLONEL. I was shot through the chest—that was when I was a first corporal. Six months I lay dying in a filthy hospital—and always my fevered lips murmured your name. . . . Did you ever think of me?

VILMA. Always—always—of no one else.

COLONEL. And so I went from battle to battle. A bullet broke my shin-bone. In the endless wastes of the African desert I lay. I was delirious—The last rites had been performed—over me the eternal stars—like your eyes. In my agony I shrieked your name into the desert night. Did you hear me?

VILMA. I heard you. I recognized your voice.

COLONEL. Once more into battle, my wound scarcely healed. But I would not die—I wanted to live—for your sake—be famous—fulfill my promise—return in triumph to you, the woman with the noble, pale brow.

VILMA. It is yours. . . .

COLONEL. With the sweet, sad mouth. . . .

VILMA. It is yours . . . everything . . . forever.

COLONEL. But you did not wait for me.

VILMA. I have waited . . . I still have your letter. . . . Here I am. I belong to no one—my splendid, glorious soldier.

KELEMEN. Drivel, drivel.

VILMA [*goes up two steps—facing halfway between KELEMEN and the COLONEL. Hysterically*]. Don't listen to him. . . . Tell him something . . . lie to him.

COLONEL. I have kept myself pure for you. It is as an innocent youth that I have come for my bride.

VILMA. Lie to him. I always do. But don't tell him you are the one—I am afraid of him.

COLONEL. You need not fear him.

VILMA. He laughed at your letter—threw it away—he ridiculed our sacred love—

KELEMEN [*horrified*]. Here—before me—publicly. . . .

VILMA. Protect me from him—I was afraid of him. . . . He'll drag me home and beat me—shut me up.

[KELEMEN *takes a step toward her.*]

COLONEL [*goes to protect VILMA*]. As long as I live no one shall harm you.

VILMA [*putting her arm around the*

COLONEL]. Don't leave me, protect me.

KELEMEN [*with icy coldness*]. Your fear is unnecessary. I will not harm you again.

VILMA. You're lying—when we go home—then I shall suffer. . . .

COLONEL [*takes VILMA's hand and holds her off*]. This woman is under my protection. I alone am responsible for her. I alone will bear her sufferings.

VILMA. Ah! . . . Just as I always dreamed of you!

[COLONEL *kisses VILMA's hands.*]

KELEMEN. In all this madness I am the only sufferer—you are draining the blood out of my heart, drop by drop. [*VILMA slowly looks center.*] But we've had enough of this for to-night. The rest we can settle to-morrow. For the present we—all of us—have only one thing to do—that is to save the good name of this house. I have pledged my word to do that. I am going to walk through the rooms with my wife on my arm and you will meet us and exchange a few words with us. Then we will leave.

VILMA. So we have to run the gauntlet. . . .

KELEMEN. I have promised—and if the Colonel is not concerned with the good name of this house, perhaps he is concerned with the good name of this lady and the good name of her child—that, at least, must be saved. Do you understand?

VILMA [*looks at the COLONEL*]. Yes.

KELEMEN [*to COLONEL*]. And you?

COLONEL. Yes.

KELEMEN. Will you do it?

COLONEL. No.

KELEMEN. As your mistress's hero, you can protect her against me, but when it is a question of your mistress's good name then I and I alone can defend it. And I will show you that on this point at least I can be quite as much of a hero as you.

COLONEL. I will not do it—I'll play in no comedies.

KELEMEN. I think you will. Because I shall make you.

COLONEL. No one can make me do that. I shall not take part in any such comedy. [VILMA looks at KELEMEN in this scene.] This woman loves me. . . . For seven years I have fought for this woman—shed my blood for her. I promised once to come for her and now I am here—now I have her—and no one shall take her from me. Her breast lay against mine—her kisses burnt their way to my heart. I questioned and she answered me as if I were her God whom she worshiped. . . . Now there rages through my veins a fiery stream—triumphant love raises its banner over my heart, proclaiming victory—glorious victory! And now a gentleman. . . . [Crosses center. KELEMEN goes right, turning away from them. VILMA crosses left center.] . . . with spectacles on his nose comes to me to make some shopkeeper's compromise. For this gentleman with spectacles on his nose—[KELEMEN removes glasses]—does not understand—and can never understand—that I am no longer a soldier—that for me the world and all it represents means nothing in the face of this overwhelming passion. All that the world can offer I cast aside—I can see nothing save that dazzling light that shines in the eyes of my

beloved bride. [Up the stairs.] Roll, you drums! Blare forth, you trumpets! Thunder, you cannon! For now I take to my heart my dearest bride!

VILMA. Ah, my glorious hero!

[Runs to him. They embrace.]

COLONEL. Bid him good-bye!

VILMA. I was not deceived in you.

COLONEL. Bid him good-bye.

[Pause. VILMA, after a struggle with herself, crosses to KELEMEN. He comforts her. Her face is turned toward KELEMEN.]

VILMA. I die for love of you.

KELEMEN. Vilma!

VILMA. I am dying of love for him, Eugen . . . dying.

KELEMEN [stroking her hair—tenderly]. Vilma!

VILMA [with long pause, sobs—she turns toward the COLONEL]. Eugen . . . I cannot go with him . . . I shall die for him.

KELEMEN [very gently]. Vilma, dear, can't you see that you're a little absurd . . . that you are talking like a character in a cheap melodrama?

VILMA [to COLONEL]. I was untrue to you—I gave up my youth to another. What is there left for you, my soldier?

COLONEL [sadly tragic]. I don't know. I am here only to take you away.

VILMA. Then take instead the knowledge that my heart is yours—Believe that . . . and go! Leave me to atone!

KELEMEN [after a long pause]. And now, Colonel, may I ask if you know where your duty points?

COLONEL. I know.

KELEMEN. Don't grudge me what little there is left me of this woman's

love. I will respect your grief always, I promise you.

VILMA. Go—I will love you forever.

LACKEY [*enters left*]. His Excellency, the Attaché, Count Warmsdorf, begs the Colonel to come to him in the Blue Room.

[LACKEY *exits*.]

COLONEL. I know what the Attaché will say to me. Doctor Kelemen, I shall be waiting in the middle of the ballroom. Then we can take our walk through the rooms.

[*Clicks his heels together and exits left*.]

KELEMEN [*escorts VILMA to chair left center. VILMA sits left center with her handkerchief to her face. Sadly*]. You didn't go with him. No, you didn't go with him.

VILMA. No, I didn't go with him. Is there a more miserable, ungrateful creature on earth than a woman?

KELEMEN. Don't worry about that. If you had loved him, you would have gone with him. . . . You don't love him.

VILMA [*bitterly*]. I don't love him. . . .

KELEMEN [*gently*]. I see what I must do. I must be gentle and kind. I must win you back . . . not on the battlefield with a sword, but at home, with kindness.

VILMA [*takes his hand*]. Yes, be kind to me . . . treat me as if I were sick.

KELEMEN. Cheap bombast drivels all of it, but you were swept up by his passion, carried away by his oratory . . . you lost your head. . . . Well, I can't compete with him, but I can be gentle and wise.

VILMA. Yes—be gentle and wise.

KELEMEN. And we shall never

speak of this again. I have forgotten it all. Will you forget it, too?

VILMA. I will.

KELEMEN. A few more years . . . then perhaps we will arrive at a more complete, more substantial happiness . . . more beautiful . . . and your little son. . . . Yes, we can still be happy.

VILMA. We can still be happy.

[*Enter two LACKEYS from right.*

The first with a champagne bucket holding three eggs packed in ice; the second with a tray on which is a cup and a spoon. At the same moment the SECRETARY enters from the left. He goes to the LACKEYS—motions to them to make haste. When he sees KELEMEN, the SECRETARY turns to him. As he begins to speak the LACKEYS turn to go.]

SECRETARY. I beg your pardon. . . .

KELEMEN. Did you want something of me?

SECRETARY. No, excuse me. We were only bringing Signor Malotti his ice-cooled eggs. . . . [*Indicates right*.] We have to pass through here to his dressing-room.

[*SECRETARY crosses back of sofa and up steps*.]

KELEMEN. I see.

SECRETARY [*to LACKEYS*]. Hurry!

[*The LACKEYS go off right, SECRETARY left*.]

KELEMEN. Rest a little, my dear . . . then we'll leave this unlucky house.

VILMA. Yes, let us go. . . . It's so close here—so oppressive. . . .

KELEMEN [*strokes her hair*]. Only a few words with the Colonel. . . .

VILMA. Must we?

KELEMEN. Yes, dear, we must. I'll ask the Attaché to come with us. That will make it easier.

VILMA. Yes, ask him to come.

KELEMEN [*crosses back of VILMA, to left of her*]. Then you wait here, dear. Rest. [*Goes left.*] No one will disturb you here. They're all at the concert. I'll go and find the Attaché. [*Goes left, then stops.*] Did you say something?

VILMA. No—only that we must go soon. Ask the Attaché to wait five or ten minutes.

KELEMEN. Yes, dear.

VILMA. Why did you laugh at his letter?

KELEMEN [*goes back to VILMA*]. I shouldn't have . . . but it was so childish. . . .

VILMA. He will return . . . as a famous soldier. . . .

KELEMEN. Let's forget that, dear.

VILMA. Or as a great statesman . . . [*Her glance goes to the left.*] . . . a . . . [*She rises suddenly from her chair.*] . . . a great statesman.

[*Steps back in amazement.*]

KELEMEN. There, there.

VILMA. He will return. . . .

KELEMEN. Shh! The Attaché is coming—control yourself. I'll go and meet him.

[*Goes left, bows before he exits.*]

VILMA continues to stare left.
A short pause.]

KELEMEN [*returns*]. Here is our patient, your Excellency. She is waiting for you.

[*The ATTACHÉ enters from the left. He is played by the same actor that played SZABO. He is in evening dress and wears many decorations. VILMA stares at him, bewildered.*]

ATTACHÉ [*crosses to center. Speaks*

quietly, tactfully, like a good physician]. My dear madame—[*VILMA retreats to right. ATTACHÉ bows, kisses VILMA's hand.*] Really you needn't be so perturbed . . . nothing has happened.

[*As the ATTACHÉ approaches her, VILMA retreats to chair.*]

KELEMEN. Your Excellency—we wished to ask you to have the kindness to accompany us when we. . . .

ATTACHÉ. I shall be only too happy to be of service.

KELEMEN. I am going to reassure our hostess—[*Crosses up steps, back of chair.*—if you will excuse me.

VILMA. Eugen!

KELEMEN [*down to VILMA*]. What is it, dearest?

VILMA. Don't you see?

KELEMEN. What?

VILMA [*behind sofa*]. His face—his face—

KELEMEN [*looks to VILMA*]. You mustn't get so excited, sweetheart. [*Crosses to ATTACHÉ.*] Your Excellency, I am sure . . . with your diplomatic tact . . . will know how to quiet our little patient.

ATTACHÉ. But. . . .

KELEMEN. Surely you can.

ATTACHÉ [*VILMA picks up fan*]. But, my dear doctor. . . .

KELEMEN [*crosses up steps*]. I shall be deeply grateful.

[*Exits.*]

ATTACHÉ [*VILMA crosses down front of sofa.*] Not at all. [*This to KELEMEN. Pause. He motions to VILMA to be seated. VILMA sits right. ATTACHÉ sits left. Very calmly.*] Well, madame, I return after seven years and learn not only that you have married but also that already there is a Colonel. . . .

VILMA [*takes her handkerchief from her eyes and looks with horror at the ATTACHÉ*]. After seven years. . .

ATTACHÉ. I promised to come back as a man of position and eminence. *Me voilà!*

VILMA. Oh, don't reproach me. For seven years I have lived without love—without life. [*Lowers her eyes.*] For three years I have been the mother of a child.

ATTACHÉ. It was always my dearest wish to be a worthy parent to your child.

VILMA. You're killing me!

ATTACHÉ. You have been married four years?

VILMA. Four years . . . didn't you know?

ATTACHÉ. My family, out of consideration for my feelings, never told me of your marriage—there was no one else with whom I corresponded.

VILMA. Why not?

ATTACHÉ. I must have feared lest I hear news of you.

VILMA. Did you take it so seriously?

ATTACHÉ. Yes.

VILMA. You know nothing about me?

ATTACHÉ. Nothing. . . Your husband is a lawyer.

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. A respectable, intelligent man—a gentleman.

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. A good husband.

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. Do you love him?

VILMA. No.

[*Pause.*]

ATTACHÉ. You have been unfaithful to him.

VILMA. No.

ATTACHÉ. I am flattered to have

you lie to me. Yet I would rather have you regard me as a friend to whom you can tell the truth.

VILMA. Do you still play such excellent tennis?

ATTACHÉ. No.

VILMA. It's a great pity.

ATTACHÉ. In 1815, the political destiny of Europe was in the hands of one man. His name was—Metternich. To-day, again, one man alone manipulates the political power of forty nations. His name is—Well, perhaps now you can understand why I have no time for tennis. I am sorry. I used to enjoy it a great deal.

VILMA. Your backhands were marvelous!

ATTACHÉ [*half rises*]. It is kind of you to say that.

VILMA. It's only the truth.

ATTACHÉ. Have you been unfaithful to him?

VILMA. No.

ATTACHÉ. You said that you did not love him.

VILMA. Yes, I said that.

ATTACHÉ. And you are young, beautiful . . . temperamental . . . and yet. . .

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. And you live with him? Don't you ever think of any one else?

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. I understand—a pure, spiritual, romantic longing.

VILMA. That is it.

ATTACHÉ. Do you still think of me as your friend?

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. You will be good enough to forget that the little law clerk has become a great diplomat—who is shortly to be ambassador to

Paris. Will you be as frank with the ambassador as you were with the law clerk?

VILMA. I will.

ATTACHÉ. Then you will tell your old friend—

VILMA. Yes.

ATTACHÉ. Who is it?

VILMA. Who?

ATTACHÉ. Your affinity—for whom you have this spiritual longing. [Pause.] Who is it? Who is it?

VILMA [*strikes pose*]. You.

[Pause.]

KELEMEN [*appears left*]. The Countess is quite calm now—my dear—if you are ready.

[Pause. VILMA and ATTACHÉ are looking at each other.]

ATTACHÉ. Just a few minutes, Doctor.

KELEMEN [*goes up the steps behind them*]. Do you want to wait?

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN [*on the steps, watching them*]. Very well.

[*Goes slowly up the steps and off left. Short pause.*]

ATTACHÉ. I don't know that I understand you correctly.

VILMA. It was you—you I thought of—every minute—every day.

ATTACHÉ. I came here *only* to be helpful to you—to tell you that you could count on me as an old friend.

VILMA. For seven years you alone have lived in my thoughts. I think of you through all the days and all the nights. It was you who gave the warmth to my hand, the brilliance to my eyes. For you I am beautiful. For you I wear beautiful clothes—For you

my soul is filled with unrest and longing for all eternity.

ATTACHÉ. Yesterday in the Orient express which brought me here, from seven-thirty till twelve three, I thought of nothing else, other than what we would say to each other.

VILMA. And I think of you in the morning when I open my eyes . . . and at night when I close them . . . and I think of you when I hear music . . . and I thought of you when I bore my child.

ATTACHÉ [*having great difficulty in remaining cold. Rises*]. Madame, for these seven years I have forced my unruly heart to submission—will you now destroy all that I have done?

VILMA [*rising*]. I can't help it. Why did you—[*A step toward center.*—come here?

ATTACHÉ. You were married—I thought you had forgotten me.

VILMA [*draws up to him*]. Why did you come? You knew that I would be here.

ATTACHÉ. I thought we would pass by one another.

VILMA. Why did you come?

ATTACHÉ. I relied on woman's inconsistency.

VILMA [*crosses close to ATTACHÉ*]. Why did you come?

ATTACHÉ [*quietly*]. Because—because I love you to-night as much as I did seven years ago when I wrote my farewell letter.

VILMA [*with satisfaction*]. That is why you came.

ATTACHÉ [*turns front*]. That is why.

VILMA [*triumphant*]. At last . . . !

[Pause.]

ATTACHÉ. Are you satisfied to have discovered my secret?

[*Sits, head in hand.*]

VILMA. It was no secret to me.

ATTACHÉ [*sits*]. Enjoy your triumph! [*Folds arms.*] The cold man with a face of stone, taught by a proud maid to bite his teeth together and smile in his anguish—always to smile; the unimpressionable diplomat who owes his success to the girl who taught him to speak other than he felt, act other than he spoke. This strong, confident man of affairs before you with the mask torn from his soul. . . . His face still bears its cold passionless expression, but beneath his orders and his ribbons you expose his bleeding heart—glowing like a great red ruby. It is his proudest decoration.

[KELEMEN *appears on the landing and stands watching.*]

VILMA [*crosses to end of bench left*]. I'll give you *my* heart in exchange.

ATTACHÉ. I don't want it.

VILMA. That is not true—you do want it. . . . Seven years ago you wrote me that you would come back for me when you had become a great statesman—and now. . . . [*His face turned to the audience.*] And now, no matter how many times you deny it and how much ashamed of it you are, you know that you have come only to show me that love is all powerful—that it has been able to make of the little law clerk the great ambassador to Paris.

ATTACHÉ [*gesture*]. No.

VILMA. You will say "no" just once more. You love me and you are in anguish to think that I did not wait for you.

ATTACHÉ. I. . . .

VILMA. Don't pretend to be cold now. . . . I shall destroy your self-composure.

ATTACHÉ. No.

VILMA. That was your last "no." You have only one desire, one longing—to have me divorce my husband, so that you can live with me. You would like to take me home in your arms, kiss my mouth until it bleeds. . . . You would like to present me as your wife before all the queens of Europe—and then, in my arms, forget them all. Now say "no"! [*Throws her head back in triumph. ATTACHÉ rises.*] Then say "yes"! And that you came to take me away.

ATTACHÉ. Yes.

VILMA. And that you kept your word—that last, beautiful promise. . . .

ATTACHÉ. Yes.

VILMA. Admit that *everything* you have done has been for *me*.

ATTACHÉ. There is a certain principality that once wanted to become a part of Austria although its inhabitants spoke Italian. To-day it has a Slovakian population—speaks Bohemian and wants to annex Italy—all because of you.

VILMA. Because of me.

ATTACHÉ. Yes. The historians will never guess the reason—but you will know it.

VILMA. How magnificent that is—how magnificent—[*Sweeps to right.*]*—everything is to-night. How marvelous and strange. . . . Armies. . . .*

ATTACHÉ. Armies cross wind-swept mountain passes. Thousands go to their death. Widows and orphans weep in desolate homes. The thunder of cannon shatters the night's quiet. Emperors and Empresses wait fearfully in tattered tents for the coming of the dawn— And money—

money—millions become nothing, and out of nothing come millions.

VILMA. And all because of me!

ATTACHÉ. The newspapers say: "At Mount Catherine the decisive battle was fought. . . . Twenty thousand men charged up the mountain side—nineteen thousand of them remained there—only a thousand returned—on stretchers— New maps must be drawn"—And why all this? Why? Because a little law clerk wanted to show his love for a little girl. *Voilà tout.*

VILMA. I knew that you would come.

ATTACHÉ. And if I had not come as I am—but as poor servant. . . .

VILMA. Even then. . . .

ATTACHÉ. Even then?

VILMA. Even then I would follow wherever you called.

ATTACHÉ. We have no time to lose. [*Places VILMA in chair right.*] Perhaps fate has allowed only these five minutes. . . . To-morrow I dine in Vienna with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. [*KELEMEN comes out from behind the curtains and creeps on tiptoe up behind them.*] The day after that I leave for Paris. Forgive my matter-of-fact tone, but the situation calls for well calculated action—without emotional interruption. We diplomats are accustomed to settle the weightiest matters coolly and without the flicker of an eyelash.

VILMA. I am beginning to be afraid of you.

ATTACHÉ. I am taking you with me to all the courts of Europe—you'll be a Queen among Queens.

VILMA. Ah!

ATTACHÉ. You will be my wife.

[*KELEMEN is directly behind them.*]

VILMA. You want me to leave my husband?

ATTACHÉ. At once.

VILMA. Forever?

ATTACHÉ. You couldn't be my mistress—I can't run away with you. . . . You must be divorced from your husband.

VILMA. I. . . .

ATTACHÉ [*pauses before each statement as if he were planning it all out*]. Be quiet. . . . I must plan this. [*His tone is cool and calculated—like the popular conception of a diplomat.*] To-morrow you will leave your husband and go to your mother's. To satisfy the law you must live with her for six months. During this period you will at no time communicate with your husband. To-day is the fourth of February . . . you leave your husband on the fifth— So the divorce proceedings will be instigated on the fifth of August. Six weeks later—on the nineteenth of September—you will obtain your divorce. On the twentieth of September at 9:34 A.M., I will arrive at the West Station. At eleven o'clock of the same day we will go to the city hall. [*Without the slightest pause.*] There is some one standing behind my back.

VILMA. Who?

ATTACHÉ. Don't turn around. Some one is standing behind my back and can hear every word that I say.

VILMA. Who? Who is it?

ATTACHÉ. So many people listen when a diplomat speaks that I have grown particularly sensitive to the presence of eavesdroppers. I have an odd sensation in the base of my spine when any one creeps up on tiptoe behind me. . . . Don't turn around,

VILMA. Suppose it were my husband!

ATTACHÉ. He is so close to me that I can feel his breath on my neck.

VILMA. We are lost!

ATTACHÉ. Naturally it is your husband. His silence is proof of that. He must have heard everything, for he has been standing there for some time. I didn't want to interrupt myself on his account. He must see that I am not afraid of him. And you, spare yourself the painfulness of making a confession. For he already knows that you are leaving him to come with me—he already knows that now you are my own sweet little bride.

KELEMEN [*in the same tone but with suppressed emotion*]. Your sweet little bride commenced the evening by throwing herself into the arms of a soldier.

ATTACHÉ. Don't be childish, Dr. Kelemen!

KELEMEN. Your sweet little bride is no sinner. Your sweet little bride is my poor, sick, forlorn wife.

[*Strokes VILMA's hair.*]

ATTACHÉ. She was.

KELEMEN. Her disgrace is mine—and it is I who must care for her.

ATTACHÉ. She is nothing to you—she belongs to me.

KELEMEN. You have betrayed me, your Excellency.

ATTACHÉ. You will give me satisfaction for that, Doctor.

KELEMEN. You wormed your way into my confidence. You promised to suppress a scandal but instead you caused a greater one. You abused your position in this house to rob your guest—the poorest of your guests.

ATTACHÉ. If it is your intention

to insult me—I can only say that I am entirely at your service.

KELEMEN. A diplomat—would do that—Steal and then murder.

ATTACHÉ. We need not go into the social and ethical necessity of dueling now. Vilma, be brave and trust in me. Get up and go with him now. [*VILMA gets up as if hypnotized.*] To-morrow you can leave him.

KELEMEN. She will not leave me.

ATTACHÉ. She will.

KELEMEN. I won't give her up.

ATTACHÉ. I shall take her. BURLINGAME

KELEMEN. See if you can. PUBLIC

VILMA. Eugen! LIB.

KELEMEN. You can shoot me in a duel and teach your son to call his father's murderer father—but that is the only way you can do it.

ATTACHÉ. I could ask my bride to choose between us. But I have not the slightest desire to make a martyr of you. I will neither break your heart nor kill you. . . . You will live. And if I live your son will call me uncle. Do not expect any explanation from my bride—she will leave your house to-morrow morning. Do you want anything else of me?

KELEMEN. No.

[*Four LACKEYS enter right. One crosses back of chair to steps. Each bears a lighted candelabra. The SECRETARY follows them with a tall, lighted candle.*]

ATTACHÉ. What is this torch-light procession? [*The four LACKEYS face to the front.*] What is it?

SECRETARY [*comes to the front and answers*]. Forgive us, Your Excellency, Signor Malotti asked for these candles in his dressing-room where he is now making up for his appear-

ance as Don Giovanni— The light was not strong enough.

[*Turns up steps. The four LACKEYS turn and all exit right.*]

ATTACHÉ [*bowing to VILMA*].
Good night.

[*Hurries off left. After the LACKEYS and the SECRETARY have gone into MALOTTI'S room, the COUNTESS and MIEZCHEN appear from the left. On the stairs MIEZCHEN holds in her hands three or four perfume bottles tied together. The COUNTESS comes down. MIEZCHEN remains on the landing. KELEMEN crosses left and VILMA crosses right.*]

COUNTESS. Where have you been, my child? [*Comes down the steps—with a deep sigh.*] It wasn't much use—but we've done as much as we could. [KELEMEN crosses to COUNTESS and observes the two. To KELEMEN.] Now what is it? You just told me, Doctor, that you were quite calm. [KELEMEN crosses to left.] Come, it isn't as bad as all that. The guests have to believe whether they like it or not that your wife was indisposed. And now we are going to silence the last doubter. The Colonel is waiting for you in the middle of the Grand Hall. Has my brother, the Attaché, spoken with you?

KELEMEN. He has.

COUNTESS. Did he straighten out everything?

KELEMEN. Very effectively.

COUNTESS. I don't understand your tone.

KELEMEN. Your Excellency, your brother has seduced my wife.

COUNTESS [*pauses, during which time MIEZCHEN hurries down the*

stairs and prepares the smelling salts].
You are mad.

KELEMEN. He seduced my wife.

COUNTESS. My brother!

KELEMEN. Your brother.

COUNTESS. Am I to understand that the excitement has made you entirely mad?

KELEMEN. A wonder that it hasn't. And so, Your Excellency, I really don't care what your guests think. I have tragedy enough of my own. As for this demonstration—

COUNTESS. But—

KELEMEN. Did you say the Colonel was standing in the middle of the ballroom? Well, the Attaché can stand there with him. Or better still, let me stand there too, and let my wife walk by with the Colonel and the Attaché—if there isn't a third by that time.

[*Crosses left.*]

COUNTESS. Doctor!

KELEMEN. Or a fourth and a fifth. [*Crosses to left center.*] The procession has been well started.

COUNTESS. My brother! My brother, too! Tell me, is this true?

VILMA. It is true.

COUNTESS. Miezchen, be prepared for me to be ill.

MIEZCHEN [*holding the bottles*]. I have everything ready, Your Excellency.

COUNTESS. The only man in the family who could deal with the scandal has become embroiled in it—so I must go on alone. Miezchen, would I be justified in putting Mrs. Kelemen out of my house?

[*VILMA bursts into tears.*]

MIEZCHEN. Yes, Your Excellency.

COUNTESS. Mrs. Kelemen has been guilty of the grossest misconduct.

KELEMEN. Countess, have consideration for a sick woman.

COUNTESS [*ironically*]. Sick?

KELEMEN. She has not sinned—to-morrow I am sending her to a sanitarium.

COUNTESS. She is sick? And you're sending her to a sanitarium? You can't deceive us that way. We of the aristocracy know what that means. This is no sickness—it is pure wantonness!

KELEMEN. Your Excellency, I cannot allow you to insult my wife.

COUNTESS. Your wife has brought dishonor to *my house*. She has even infected my own family with her immorality. She has tried to involve my brother. Your wife is a—

KELEMEN [*crosses to* COUNTESS]. Countess!

COUNTESS. She is a person!

[*Crosses to left center.*]

KELEMEN. In six months she will be your sister-in-law.

COUNTESS. Mine?

KELEMEN. And bear your name.

COUNTESS. My name?

KELEMEN. Your brother's name. You have insulted the wife of an Ambassador.

COUNTESS [*about to faint*]. Miezechen!

MIEZCHEN. Yes, Countess, I am ready.

[*Crosses to* COUNTESS.]

KELEMEN. Your brother gave my wife his word of honor that on the twentieth of September at eleven o'clock in the morning he would take her to the marriage office. [*Crosses up steps.*] I have the honor to invite you to the ceremony.

[*He exits left.*]

COUNTESS. Miezechen, can I . . . ?

MIEZCHEN [*knecks the bottles to-*

gether again]. Yes, Your Excellency. [COUNTESS *sinks into* MIEZCHEN's arms. MIEZCHEN *holds a bottle below her nose.*]

SECRETARY [*runs in, sees the* COUNTESS, *steps back a little*]. Your Excellency, forgive me for interrupting—but Signor Malotti is about to give the scene from "Don Giovanni"—

[*Horried, he comes down.*] What's the matter?

MIEZCHEN. The Countess is indisposed.

[*She takes a sheet of paper out of her blouse. Supporting the* COUNTESS *she exits left.*]

SECRETARY [*very excited. During the speech he runs up and down the stairs while he speaks to* VILMA]. Madame, may I inform you that Signor Malotti, the great baritone, will presently pass through here? On his way to the concert platform. . . . He does not like to meet any one when he is in costume. [LACKEYS *start.*] If madame will be so kind as to. . . . [*He sees that* VILMA *is paying no attention.* FOUR LACKEYS *appear, each bearing a lighted candelabra.* MALOTTI, *dressed as* Don Giovanni, *follows them—his manner is very affected.* MALOTTI *is played by the same actor that played* SZABO. VILMA *crosses up to right foot of steps.*] I must hurry and start the applause.

[*He rushes off left.*]

MALOTTI. Never—in any place—at any time—under any circumstances do I sing in full costume for less than forty thousand kronen. But to-night—because I learn you are here—I consent to sing for only twenty-five thousand.

[*The* LACKEYS *are now in a straight row.*]

VILMA. I knew it—I had your letter, your promise that you would return as a world celebrated artist to take me away. Ah [*She takes a step toward him.*], light of my life, joy of my heart, I knew it. . . .

MALOTTI. *Pas devant les domestiques!*

[*Motions the LACKEYS away.*

They make their exit in military fashion. MALOTTI *does not move until the LACKEYS are off. Then he turns slowly to VILMA.*]

VILMA. How splendid you are!

MALOTTI. I have only a minute, Vilma carissima. . . . Out there in the concert hall these dumb crowds—they are steaming with their desire to hear me—well, let them steam. I promised to come back, amore mia. . . . Mine is the fame, mine the triumph, mine the immortality. But everything . . . everything . . . I lay at your tiny feet.

VILMA [*goes up to him*]. How passionately you whisper!

MALOTTI. I'm saving my voice, sweet. For seven years I struggle to make myself more perfect— Over there in America, I sang on the street corners for the few pennies that were tossed in my hat. This was the song I sang—[*sings*—“You shall my companion be. . . .” It was the song that made me famous—made me the greatest baritone in the world. At courts I sang it, in concert halls, opera houses, palaces—sang it for money—for filthy lucre—ten per cent of the gross. I sang always this song—“You shall my companion be. . . .” So I struggled for fame—but not for myself—no, only for you—for you alone. Even the name Malotti I chose because of you.

VILMA. How beautiful it sounds—how impressive—

MALOTTI. I used it because of you. I did not want you to hear of my triumph too soon.

VILMA. This is the way I saw you in my dream.

MALOTTI. How?

VILMA. This way—

MALOTTI. Well, that's the way I am. Two years ago, the director of the Metropolitan invites me to join his company. I was engaged as the ninth baritone.

VILMA. How many were there altogether.

MALOTTI. Nine. But the eighth married an heiress. Then I was the eighth. The seventh is dismissed and then I am the seventh. I climb higher and higher. They conspire against me. But intrigue and treachery can do nothing. The sixth fell off the subway platform and I am the sixth. The fifth ate oysters in July and I am the fifth. Then I tell the manager something about his wife, and he shoots the next three baritones. Finally, last year I became the first baritone because the first baritone lost his voice.

VILMA. What became of him?

MALOTTI. He became a tenor. So I climb the ladder—but not for cheap notoriety nor dirty gold—not for Paris, Berlin, London, Chicago, but for Odenberg—for you.

VILMA [*follows him up*]. Sweet lover—I believed in you—I knew that you would come for me—and you have come at the right time—in my hour of deepest need. Take me away from here—take me away—

MALOTTI. To lift you up to my heights—it is my only desire. [*He takes her hand and raises it. He*

leads her, as a dancer in a circus is led, down three steps.] Come—come—

SECRETARY [*enters left, very excited*]. Forgive me, Signor.

MALOTTI. Go away.

SECRETARY. The audience—

MALOTTI. Get out!

[*Puts his arms round VILMA.*]

SECRETARY. They grow impatient—they're applauding.

MALOTTI. Let them applaud! Go away!

SECRETARY. But—

MALOTTI. You make me nervous! Nervous! Another word and I won't appear at all.

SECRETARY [*following MALOTTI around*]. I didn't say anything—

[*Hurries out, his hand over his mouth.*]

VILMA. Go! Go and win new laurels—for me.

MALOTTI [*the following speech is in crescendo. The sentence "You shall my companion be in all the realms of art," is a sort of refrain. Each time it is repeated with more pathos—until at the end MALOTTI breaks into song*]. No! First you must learn what you mean to me. Not a wife—a wife who listens with trembling heart to the applause which greets her husband. No!—in all the realms of sacred art, you shall my companion be! I shall make an artist of you. You will become an actress, a singer. Never again will I tread the boards without you. In all the realms of sacred art, you shall my companion be. You shall feel the burning gaze of thousands— Out there before the dazzling lights, before rows upon rows of enraptured men and women, will I press you to my heart. I in my glittering suit of mail—when the blast of trumpets summon

heroes to the forefront of the battle— when sobbing violins tenderly sing of eternal love—of ecstasy unending— when a thousand hearts pulse as one—when the applause breaks forth like the bursting of a thunder cloud— then, then, best beloved, in the sacred realms of art, you shall my companion be— There before all the world, mad-dened with delight I will kiss you. Then in all the realms of sacred art, you shall my companion be. [*He changes from this into the Toreador song from "Carmen."* VILMA *applauds and comes down to MALOTTI.*] You should have heard what the newspapers said the first time I sang that. [*Indicates pile of notices with both hands.*] The notices I got!

[*Starts to sing Toreador again.*]

VILMA. But do be careful of your voice, dearest.

MALOTTI. My feelings carry me away—my heart, it is too full—

VILMA. Perhaps some eggs cooled in ice, dear—

MALOTTI [*puts his arms around her*]. Ah—what a wife! Already you know that!

SECRETARY [*enters*]. Signor—forgive me for disturbing you—but you seem to be mistaken as to where you are. [*MALOTTI turns to SECRETARY.*] You were singing in here—while the audience is waiting in the concert room.

MALOTTI. What do I care for your audience?

SECRETARY. I beg your pardon, Signor Malotti.

VILMA [*happily*]. Go, go, my lover, I'll wait you—

COUNTESS. Signor Malotti!

[*The COUNTESS and MIEZCHEN enter.*]

MALOTTI. What do I care for your

audience and their applause? What do I care for gold—what do I care for fame—[*Pointing to VILMA.*]—when my sweet betrothed, my jewel, my darling—

COUNTESS [*cries out*]. Miezechen!

MIEZCHEN. I have forgotten the smelling salts. [*Emphatically.*] But, Excellency, I couldn't count on this.

COUNTESS [*fainting*]. Oh, my head!

[*Staggers out left with MIEZCHEN. KELEMEN appears at the top of the stairs. MALOTTI, by the armchair left, seizes VILMA's hand.*]

SECRETARY [*rushes up to meet KELEMEN, to hold him back. Wildly gesticulating and stammering*]. Doctor—for heaven's sake, control yourself!

KELEMEN [*looks on the scene dumbly as if he were beyond surprising. Throws SECRETARY aside, crossing to the left*]. What is it?

SECRETARY. A terrible misfortune, Doctor—a catastrophe.

[*KELEMEN comes down the stairs.*]

KELEMEN [*pushes him out of the way*]. What is it?

[*The SECRETARY rushes out right, with his hand to his head.*]

VILMA [*crosses to KELEMEN. She turns fearlessly toward her husband but keeps looking back at MALOTTI. When she speaks she leans her back against KELEMEN and reaches for his hand. She points with her other hand to MALOTTI*]. He came for me—as he promised in his letter—he came for me—as world renowned artist—a King among Kings—and he is taking me away with him—

MALOTTI. Who is this man?

VILMA. My husband.

MALOTTI [*comically heaves a sigh of relief—then with affected grief*]. You are married?

VILMA [*comes down*]. Yes—but I love only you—I will go away with you—

[*SECRETARY rushes in right. He is beyond words. He only leans against the pillar with arms stretched toward MALOTTI.*]

MALOTTI [*in the broken voice of the ham actor. He puts his hand on the SECRETARY's shoulder, who has staggered to the armchair*]. Lead me to the stage—now I need their applause. I put my trust in a woman—hereafter I trust only in art.

[*A broken man, he takes three faltering steps to the exit. Then he stops, pats his hand over his mouth and sings three or four notes. Then he pirouettes off. The applause of his audience is heard off stage, gradually dwindling. MRS. RITTER enters left.*]

VILMA [*looks after MALOTTI*]. If I can't be his wife then I'll be his mistress. I'll go to him—follow him like a dog—beseech him to let me stay at his side.

[*MRS. RITTER goes to KELEMEN, who is in a daze. He stands staring straight ahead of him.*]

KELEMEN [*sinks on MRS. RITTER's shoulder*]. Mother!

MRS. RITTER. My dear son-in-law—be strong—take my daughter away from here—I know everything.

KELEMEN. Mama!

MRS. RITTER. The Countess is unconscious—the guests know the whole story.

VILMA [*still in a trance. Clasps her*

hands, crosses center]. I didn't wait for him—I married—just to be married. I wanted to be a lawyer's wife.

[Crosses up steps.]

MRS. RITTER. Don't listen to her.

KELEMEN. Mother, let's take her out of here, the poor child.

VILMA *[on steps as above]*. But he did not return in vain. I am his—if not his wife then his mistress—his uncomplaining slave—On my knees I'll crawl back to him—out into the splendor and the light—

MRS. RITTER. Dear son—we must go away from here.

KELEMEN. My poor little son! My poor Peter!

MRS. RITTER. Be a man, Eugen—I'll go and get the wraps. Have them get a cab—then we'll take her home—Stay here with her—be strong and gentle.

[Hurries out left.]

VILMA. Now he is singing—with his—*[KELEMEN sinks into chair left.]*—sweet, strong voice. His heart is filled with thoughts of me. It is my soul that you hear singing—my love is in his very voice. *[Four LACKEYS enter right, come down steps, exit left. Crosses to center.]* Who are you, you desolate man? Who are you, you deceived man? Didn't you foresee it this evening in the restaurant—didn't you read his letter—that pitiful, love-sick letter? Didn't you know that he would come for me? Could you have thought that I would forget him—that I would cease loving him? *[Four LACKEYS enter left and exit right. VILMA turns around and sweeps the whole stage with her glance. With her hand to her brow.]* Ah, this is life—no, more beautiful than life—*[KELEMEN has sunk into a chair, a*

beaten man. He covers his face with his hands. Sharp pause. The LACKEYS enter right, come all the way in—they turn their backs to the audience. They walk up the stairs and then turn to the left to go off. All four are still visible when VILMA speaks to the last one who has got up to the third step. During the following scene KELEMEN removes his hands from his face and apathetically watches VILMA and the LACKEY.] Oh—er— A glass of lemonade, please. *[The first three LACKEYS exeunt while VILMA approaches the stairs.]* A glass of—*[The FOURTH LACKEY turns slowly around and stands motionless on the second step. He is played by the same actor that played SZABO.]*—lemon—

[The word sticks in her throat.]

LACKEY. As a poor servant—

VILMA *[syllable by syllable]*. A glass of lem-on-ade.

LACKEY. If I come back as a poor beggarly servant—*[VILMA slowly takes a glass from the large tray which he carries.]*—even then—

VILMA. Even then—

LACKEY. I have come to nothing—I went out into the world once—you know—

VILMA. I know.

LACKEY. I wanted to become a famous soldier—or a great statesman—or a celebrated artist—and then come back to take you away.

VILMA. Come—to take me away—

LACKEY. And here I am—a nobody—a good-for-nothing—a footman—a servant—

VILMA. You are beautiful.

LACKEY. That's what the Countess said.

VILMA. You were untrue—to me?

LACKEY. One has to live—but my

heart—the heart of this wretched servant—is yours—forever yours—you proud, noble woman.

VILMA. Be careful—my husband is watching.

LACKEY. I'm not afraid of any one.

VILMA. I'll give you work.

LACKEY. They give me a hundred and twenty here.

VILMA [*shocked*]. Oh!

LACKEY. I'm no gentleman.

VILMA. To see you like this!

LACKEY. You let me sink to it—always down—this livery.

VILMA. You are beautiful.

LACKEY. The Countess' chamber-maid said that, too.

VILMA. She, too?

LACKEY. Are you jealous? Oh, I am ashamed.

VILMA. What of?

LACKEY. Of this silver tray which I must hold in my hands. [*With suppressed passion.*] If I could only throw it down.

VILMA. For heaven's sake—not so loud.

LACKEY. Are you afraid of me?

VILMA. No.

LACKEY. Could you?

VILMA. I could.

LACKEY. I wrote you.

VILMA. I remember.

LACKEY. Even as I am?

VILMA. As you are.

LACKEY. Do you mean it?

VILMA. I mean it.

LACKEY. Forever?

VILMA. Forever and ever.

LACKEY. And—

VILMA. I'll leave everything behind.

LACKEY. To-morrow?

VILMA. To-morrow. And even—

LACKEY. Even?

VILMA. And even into the gutter—yes, even—

LACKEY. Even?

VILMA. Even to prison.

LACKEY. Go on, go on.

VILMA. No, I can't. [*Puts the glass back on tray.*] The glass is empty—go now—

LACKEY. Drink another one.

VILMA [*looks with one eye at KELEMEN, who, leaning on the arm of the chair, is bent way forward watching them*]. My husband!

LACKEY. What of him?

VILMA. Go! In the morning . . . Go!

LACKEY. No!

VILMA [*goes toward KELEMEN, but speaks to LACKEY*]. Thank you. [*Whispering.*] I love you. [*Speaks.*] That is all. [*VILMA stands by the armchair. The LACKEY does not move.*] You can go. [*She turns her back to him and speaks to her husband. The LACKEY does not move. To KELEMEN.*] What are you staring at? Come, let us get our things and go.

[*The LACKEY stands motionless, looking straight ahead. KELEMEN puts both arms on the arms of his chair, ready to jump up. A short pause.*]

KELEMEN [*in the chair*]. Are you deaf? [*LACKEY stands motionless and does not answer.*] You can go—get out. [*LACKEY does not move.*] Well? [*Gets up ominously. LACKEY stares back at KELEMEN.*] What do you mean by speaking to my wife? [*LACKEY does not move. He goes up to LACKEY. He has come out of his lethargy.*] What do you mean by speaking to my wife?

LACKEY. Don't speak to me in that tone.

KELEMEN. You!

LACKEY. Not in that tone!

KELEMEN. You fellow! You flunkey!

LACKEY. If I could put down this tray. . . .

KELEMEN. What do you mean by addressing my wife?

LACKEY. I am not here to give out information—only to serve the refreshments. Will you have lemonade or orangeade?

KELEMEN. What did you say to her? What did she say to you?

LACKEY. Nothing.

KELEMEN. I suppose your honor as a lackey prevents you from answering.

LACKEY. Don't use that tone to me.

KELEMEN. How dare you?

LACKEY. She spoke to me.

KELEMEN. You lie!

LACKEY. She loves me.

KELEMEN. You—!

LACKEY [*stiffly, moving only his eyes. He holds the tray high up on his chest, with both hands. He is the caricature of the enamored lackey*]. She loves me and you can do nothing about it. Seven years before you I kissed her lips. For this proud, noble woman is in love with the companion of her girlhood—even though he has sunk to being a footman. And I can laugh at you, Doctor—you can't fight a duel with me— You can have me beaten and put out of service—but I shall go on living—and loving your wife—and she will love me—for I am the man she longs for—not you, Doctor Kelemen.

KELEMEN. Get out, get out now!

LACKEY. Oh, yes—you can have me thrown out.

KELEMEN. And that I will.

LACKEY. But she won't love me any less for that.

KELEMEN. I'll have you thrown out the window.

LACKEY. She'll jump after me.

KELEMEN. A whip—a horsewhip for the fellow!

[*Rushes up the stairs and off left.*]

VILMA [*hurries up to the LACKEY. The quick tempo is resumed*]. You're stupid.

LACKEY. I'm not afraid of him.

VILMA. If you'd simply come to me . . . in the morning . . .

LACKEY. You knew what I would do.

VILMA. Poor boy. . . .

LACKEY. Don't pity me!

VILMA. I am yours.

LACKEY. You lie.

VILMA. Forever! BURLINGAME

LACKEY. You lie. PUBLIC

VILMA. I'm not lying. LIB.

LACKEY. Then. . . .

VILMA. Then?

LACKEY. Kiss me!

VILMA [*draws away from him*]. No.

LACKEY. Kiss me!

VILMA. Here?

LACKEY. Here, now.

VILMA. Wait.

LACKEY. Now. This minute!

VILMA. You're killing me.

LACKEY. Let me drop this tray. . . .

VILMA [*retreating from him*]. Oh, God!

LACKEY. Let me put down this tray . . .

[*Puts tray on chair.*]

VILMA [*crosses to center*]. Come

. . . [*She opens her arms. LACKEY puts down the tray and hurries to VILMA. They kiss.*] Now do you believe that I love you?

[*Sinks on his breast.*]

LACKEY. You beautiful, faithless, noble lady!

[*Takes her in his arms and kisses her on the mouth. From the left come KELEMEN, the COUNTESS, MIEZCHEN, and the SECRETARY. The COUNTESS screams. The SECRETARY runs up the stairs.*]

LACKEY. What are you gaping at? We are in love. What do we care for you now . . .

[*Kisses VILMA again.*]

KELEMEN [*rushes at LACKEY with*

upraised fist]. You have betrayed me! I'll kill you.

[*Off stage to the right are heard three knocks on the door. At the first knock all the characters on the stage turn and look toward the door. KELEMEN's fist remains in the air. The LACKEY releases VILMA. The lights are dimmed.*]

THE VOICE OF THE GOVERNESS [*immediately after the knocking stops again. Her voice seems to come from a great distance although it is quite audible*]. Mrs. Kelemen! [*The stage becomes entirely dark.*] Time to get up. . . . It is quarter to ten.

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[*SCENE: The same scene as Act Two, Scene One.*]

AT RISE: VILMA *is sleeping on the couch. The GOVERNESS is heard knocking on the door at the right.*]

GOVERNESS [*calling*]. Mrs. Kelemen. [*The door right opens. Light streams in from the next room.*] Mrs. Kelemen. It's time to get up. It's quarter to ten.

VILMA [*crying out in her sleep*]. No! No!

[*Pause.*]

GOVERNESS. Mrs. Kelemen! It's time for you to dress—quarter to ten. I'll turn on the light. [*Turns on table light, then lights desk light.*] You did sleep well. . . .

VILMA [*startled*]. What? [*Sits up.*] What? Oh. . . . Yes. . . . [*Brushes back the hair from her forehead. Sighs.*] Yes. . . .

GOVERNESS. How soundly you sleep!

VILMA. Yes. [*Pause.*] What time is it?

GOVERNESS. Quarter to ten.

VILMA [*mechanically*]. Quarter to ten.

[*Rests her head on the arm of the couch.*]

GOVERNESS [*after waiting a bit*]. Mrs. Kelemen—it's time for you to get dressed. I have your things all laid out—in your dressing-room. And the cook is waiting to see you about the accounts.

VILMA [*stupid with sleep*]. My husband. . . .

GOVERNESS [*puzzled by VILMA's behavior*]. He is in the library writing.

VILMA. Writing.

GOVERNESS. He's working in there.

I'll tell him . . . [*Puzzled.*] . . . that you're awake.

[*She exits. VILMA stares straight ahead of her for a few moments—then lets her head sink on the arm of the couch again. Pause.*]

KELEMEN [*enters. Goes center, followed by the GOVERNESS. He is already in evening dress except that he wears a dressing gown*]. You still in here! [*At right of couch.*] I thought you were dressing. . . .

VILMA. No—I went to sleep.

GOVERNESS. I'll send the cook in.

[*Exits to nursery.*]

KELEMEN. Have a good nap?

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN [*indicating dress suit*]. I've put on my suit of armor—to go after the million—I've got stage fright. [*Crosses to back of desk.*] This Attaché is beginning to worry me.

VILMA [*rising*]. The Attaché?

KELEMEN. The Attaché. I don't know what kind of a man he is—whether he is an easy man to deal with—or not. Everything depends on him. You'll have to be nice to him, too.

VILMA [*crosses right*]. Yes.

[*Slowly crosses right and sits.*]

[*The PARLOR MAID enters left.*]

MAID. Doctor . . . [*She holds out a card to him.*] . . . this gentleman is waiting outside.

KELEMEN. Calling—at this hour? Did you tell him I wasn't at home?

MAID. I told him you never saw any one in the evening. But he said it was important—and I should say he came from Dr. Lewicky—from Odenburg.

KELEMEN. Lewicky?—Oh, that's different.

[*Takes the card.*]

VILMA [*goes to him*]. Who is it?

KELEMEN. Georg Szabo.

VILMA [*rising*]. Georg Szabo? From Lewicky?

KELEMEN. So it would seem.

VILMA. I'll go.

[*Starts up right to leave.*]

KELEMEN [*rises—follows*]. Why go?—No, I want to show you that I'm cured. Stay and receive him with me.

VILMA. No . . . I'm not curious. . . .

[*Goes to door.*]

KELEMEN. Either stay or come in later—please. I want to convince you . . . show you that . . .

VILMA. You child.

KELEMEN. You'll come back?

VILMA. If you want.

KELEMEN. I'll call you.

VILMA. As you like.

[*Exits right.*]

KELEMEN [*to PARLOR MAID*]. Have him come in.

MAID. Yes, sir.

[*VILMA and MAID exeunt separately. Pause.*]

SZABO [*enters. The typical clumsy, embarrassed provincial*]. Good evening.

KELEMEN [*goes to meet SZABO*]. Good evening. I am Dr. Kelemen.

SZABO. My name is Szabo. Forgive me for disturbing you at such an hour—I intended to come in the morning. Or I might have spoken to you this evening—when I saw you at the restaurant. But I didn't like to trouble you then. However, after supper I received a telegram from my chief.

[*Produces telegram.*]

KELEMEN. Your chief?

SZABO. Yes. Dr. Carl Lewicky.

KELEMEN. So Dr. Lewicky is your chief?

SZABO. Well, I've been in charge of his office for three months. Before that I was in Arad for two years. Then I went back to Odenburg.

KELEMEN. Won't you sit down? [*Motions him to be seated. SZABO sits at left of the table at right. KELEMEN reads the telegram, after sitting at right of the table.*] "Find Kelemen immediately. Inform him North-eastern meadows incorrectly valued. Attaché may not know this. See Kelemen before reception. Telephone answer."

SZABO [*stands up*]. Dr. Lewicky thought . . .

KELEMEN. That I should know of this before seeing the Attaché. Thank you. [*SZABO sits again.*] "Letter follows."

SZABO [*goes to him*]. I think the letter will say that Representative Raday has complicated the situation by his interference.

KELEMEN. You are a native of Odenburg?

SZABO. Yes.

KELEMEN. Strange—I didn't know you there.

SZABO. I've been away from home for the last seven years. First in Paris, then in Raab—then two years in Arad—

KELEMEN. But finally your longing for home. . . .

SZABO. Yes—home. . . .

KELEMEN. And now you're going to stay there?

SZABO. No—I'm going to stay here.

KELEMEN. Here? But your work?

SZABO. That's why I'm going to

stay here—on account of this business.

KELEMEN. What business?

SZABO. Getting the lease. . . . Dr. Lewicky will explain in his letter. He has sent me to work under you—

KELEMEN. Under me?

SZABO. That is, until everything is settled—which won't be before six months.

KELEMEN. Work under me?

SZABO. In your office. . . . You see, I handled all the correspondence in the matter—so if you can give me a desk—

KELEMEN. Certainly, certainly.

[*Pause.*]

SZABO. Dr. Lewicky felt it would make it easier for him—and perhaps for you, too.

KELEMEN. I'm sure it will.

[*Pause.*]

SZABO. I wonder if I might telephone Dr. Lewicky from here?

KELEMEN. Yes, surely.

[*Crosses to bell. Rings.*]

SZABO [*half rises*]. It's late I know, but—

KELEMEN. That's quite all right . . . [*Crosses back to center. Pause.*] I suppose you have a practice on the side. . . .

SZABO. Well . . . no, I don't. I haven't passed my Bar examinations yet.

KELEMEN. Oh. You haven't passed your Bar examinations yet?

SZABO. Unfortunately not.

KELEMEN [*patting SZABO on the back*]. Oh, well, all in good time. [*To MAID.*] Show Mr. Szabo to the telephone. [*SZABO and MAID exit—he calls in VILMA.*] Vilma!

[*She enters right in negligée.*]

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN. Why, I thought you were dressed.

VILMA. Not yet. I didn't want to come in till I was. But if I hadn't come in, then you would have said that I was afraid to meet him. Where is he?

KELEMEN. Telephoning.

VILMA. What's so important that he has to telephone at this hour?

KELEMEN. He's phoning Lewicky—in Odenburg.

VILMA. Lewicky?

KELEMEN. He has been Dr. Lewicky's head clerk for the last three months.

VILMA [*at left of table at right. Sits*]. What is he doing here?

KELEMEN [*follows*]. I don't know whether you will receive the news with as much indifference as I did. But—he is to work here for six months as Lewicky's representative. In my office.

VILMA. Six months?

KELEMEN. Yes.

SZABO [*enters left*]. I beg your pardon, what is your number? [*Sees VILMA.*] Oh, good evening.

VILMA. How do you do.

SZABO. Please excuse me. But Central wanted to know your number.

KELEMEN. 19726.

SZABO. 19726?

VILMA [*crosses to desk left. Writes the number on a piece of paper*]. I'll write it for you. 19726.

[*Hands him the paper.*]

SZABO. Thank you—thank you very much.

[*Exits. Pause.*]

VILMA [*crosses up to couch*]. Why six months?

KELEMEN [*crosses to her*]. He is Lewicky's representative.

[*VILMA sits on couch. He goes and sits at her right. Puts his arm around her.*]

VILMA. But why six months?

KELEMEN. The thing won't be settled till then. [*With forced cheeriness.*] But, dear, it will give me a chance to show you that I'm not worried about him. He'll be here every day—and in the evening he'll go to the theatre with us.

VILMA. There's no need for that.

[*Knock. SZABO opens the door. He sees KELEMEN and VILMA sitting together. He closes the door again saying, "Excuse me." Whereupon KELEMEN says, "Come in." SZABO enters.*]

SZABO. She took the number—she'll have Odenburg in five minutes.

KELEMEN. Come and sit here—while you're waiting.

SZABO. Thank you—but I don't like to—

BURLINGAME

KELEMEN. What?

PUBLIC

SZABO. Disturb you.

LIB.

[*VILMA makes room on the couch for SZABO, who sits next to her.*]

KELEMEN [*rings*]. Not at all. [*To the entering PARLOR MAID.*] The cognac, please.

PARLOR MAID. Yes, sir.

[*Exits.*]

KELEMEN [*gets cigarettes from table right. Starts to sit between them—VILMA makes room for him*]. Cigarette?

[*The PARLOR MAID enters with the decanter of cognac and places it with glasses on the table.*]

SZABO. No, thanks.

KELEMEN. Sure?

SZABO. Well, perhaps I will—if Mrs. Kelemen—

VILMA. Please do.

KELEMEN. Pour a glass for Mr. Szabo, dear.

VILMA [*crosses to desk and pours drinks. Stands*]. I understand you're associated with Dr. Lewicky.

SZABO [*with a forced smile*]. I can't say that—I'm just his head clerk.

[*VILMA pours three glasses. Both men stand to receive them.*]

KELEMEN. Aren't you having any?

VILMA. Shall I?

KELEMEN. Surely.

VILMA. All right.

[*Takes third glass. They click glasses ceremoniously. Drink. Stand with their glasses in their hands. Pause. VILMA puts her glass down with a bang. Then SZABO does the same—then KELEMEN. Now VILMA sits in the left corner of the sofa. SZABO sits next to her. But when KELEMEN sits down SZABO makes room for him next to VILMA. Pause.*]

KELEMEN. Why didn't you come over to our table to-night?

SZABO. I thought—I mean I—I planned to call on you in the morning.

VILMA [*smiling*]. If you will excuse me, I'll go and dress now.

[*Starts to get up.*]

KELEMEN [*restraining her*]. Come, you have plenty of time. It's only quarter of ten. Plenty of time.

VILMA. Do you think so?

KELEMEN. Of course.

VILMA [*sits again. Painful pause*]. Do you come to the city often?

SZABO. Not very often—only now and then.

KELEMEN. Do you like to go to the theatre?

SZABO. Oh, very much.

KELEMEN. You'll have to come with us some night—won't he, Vilma?

VILMA. Of course.

SZABO. I'll be very grateful.

KELEMEN [*stands*]. You must excuse me now. I must attend to a few things. My wife will entertain you—until your call comes through.

VILMA. But, Eugen—

KELEMEN. Yes?

VILMA. Can't you do what you have to to-morrow?

KELEMEN. No, dear. It has to do with the lease. I and my colleague here—[*Indicates SZABO.*—know that it must be done to-night. [*To SZABO.*] Don't we?

SZABO. Oh, yes.

KELEMEN. That's why he called on us so late.

[*Starts to rise.*]

SZABO [*embarrassed*]. Please forgive me for that. But you see—

[*Starts to get up.*]

KELEMEN [*forces him back into couch*]. Do sit down and stop apologizing. [*Starts to go.*] Entertain him, Vilma.

[*Stands a moment at door, then exits left. Long pause.*]

VILMA. I understand you will be with us for some time.

SZABO. Yes. You see—the idea of getting this lease—

VILMA. Was yours.

SZABO. Well—not altogether. But I—

VILMA. You worked it out.

SZABO. Well—more or less.

VILMA. Were you living permanently in Odenburg?

SZABO. Yes.

VILMA. And now here?

SZABO. Now here.

VILMA. And then?

SZABO. Odenburg again.

[*Pause.*]

VILMA. Permanently?

SZABO. Permanently. I lived in Raab for a time.

VILMA. Oh.

SZABO. Yes.

[*Pause.*]

VILMA. Permanently.

SZABO. Permanently. Before that—in Arad.

VILMA. Oh—in Arad!

[*As if this was cause for joy.*]

SZABO. But not permanently.

VILMA. Oh—just for a short time. Yes, it's a beautiful city.

SZABO. Were you ever there?

VILMA. No.

SZABO. I wondered—it's a horrible city.

VILMA. So I've heard.

SZABO. A beautiful city.

VILMA. A beautiful city.

SZABO. Yes.

VILMA. Yes.

SZABO. Before that I was in Paris. But I had to come back home—on account of military service.

VILMA [*with sudden interest*]. Military service?

SZABO. And then I stayed at home.

VILMA. Oh—what sort of soldier were you?

SZABO. I was exempted.

VILMA. You weren't a soldier?

SZABO. No.

VILMA. You really weren't a soldier?

SZABO. Does that surprise you?

VILMA. No—only . . .

SZABO. People don't notice. [*Points to foot.*] Thank God! [*Embarrassed—whispers.*] Flat foot.

VILMA. That's not serious.

SZABO. Fortunately not.

VILMA. My husband was exempted, too.

SZABO. Oh, did he—?

[*Points to foot.*]

VILMA [*sharply*]. No. [*Points to eyes.*] Shortsighted.

[*Crosses to the right, and gets at left of the table.*]

SZABO. Oh, that's good, too. [*Rises. Follows.*] But I really didn't have to come home from Paris. I could have been examined at our embassy in Paris. I know the Serbians all went to their embassy.

VILMA. The Serbians?

[*Stands. SZABO stands.*]

SZABO. Yes—they have a medical officer there.

VILMA. They may have a medical officer—but they haven't an embassy.

[*Sits right.*]

SZABO. No?

VILMA. The Serbians haven't an embassy—only a legation.

SZABO. Well, legation then. [*Laughs.*] How should I know what the Serbians have?

VILMA. You wouldn't have made much of a diplomat.

SZABO. I can believe that. But I wouldn't want to be a diplomat. Always lying and pretending and then never knowing where you're at.

VILMA. But what a career—[*Dreamily.*] What a magnificent career.

SZABO. Not for me—I don't like diplomats. That's why I wouldn't go to the embassy to be examined. Once I went there for a visa and they kept me waiting until I got mad. Then they threw me out.

[*Quite indignant about it.*]

VILMA. Threw you out?

SZABO. Yes—right out of the embassy.

VILMA. Your diplomatic experience was short.

SZABO. Very short.

VILMA. Yes. [*Pause.*] What were you doing in Paris?

SZABO. Oh—the same as the other foreigners—nothing. I went in for Bohemian life—even thought of being an artist. But . . .

VILMA. But?

SZABO. I had no talent. I couldn't draw the leg of a chair. Nor paint. But that other—What do you call it? [*Makes a gesture.*] You know—with statues. . . .

VILMA. Sculpture.

SZABO. Yes, that's it. I couldn't sculp. [*Quickly.*] And I hadn't any ear for music—I'm as stone deaf as an umbrella.

VILMA. Did you ever sing?

SZABO. No.

VILMA. Never?

SZABO. Well, not often. I have sung. When they played the gypsy music in the café—but it always drove every one away.

[*Laughs.*]

VILMA [*dreamily*]. How heavenly to be able to sing.

SZABO. Yes—if you know how.

[*Pause.*]

VILMA. A little cognac?

SZABO [*crosses to desk*]. VILMA rises, crosses to center]. Well—er—perhaps I will. [*Goes to decanter, pours out glass.*] Will you have some?

VILMA. No. No, thank you.

SZABO. Oh, come—if I urge you—just for me.

VILMA. No, thank you.

SZABO. Just half a glass?

VILMA [*laughing*]. Oh, well—but only a drop.

SZABO [*fills two glasses and then to appear clever, carries them on a tray with one hand. He hits the leg of the chair—the glasses fall to the floor with a crash*]. Whoop!

VILMA. It's nothing.

SZABO [*mopping chair and carpet. He holds the tray in his hand*]. I'm so sorry—forgive me. I don't know what to say.

VILMA. Don't bother. You would have made a bad—

SZABO [*stands behind the little table, looking at the tray in his hand*]. I would have made a bad waiter.

VILMA. And a bad footman.

SZABO. That's no lie. Perhaps I was born to be a gentleman.

VILMA [*by the desk. Suddenly faces audience; she holds her hands as if she were carrying a large tray*]. Now if you had a great tray—like that footman—with fifty glasses . . .

SZABO. I was bad enough with two.

VILMA [*sighs and laughs at the same time*]. Ha! Ha! You can still have your cognac.

SZABO. No, I'll punish myself and not drink any more.

VILMA. Oh—how strong you are.

SZABO. One has to be. [*Pause.*] Odenburg should be calling.

[*He looks toward the door.*]

VILMA. Yes.

SZABO [*sadly*]. But it doesn't call.

VILMA. Have patience.

SZABO. Odenburg doesn't dare to call.

VILMA. What?

SZABO. Odenburg doesn't know whether it should or not—it is so many years.

VILMA. I don't understand.

SZABO. It is seven years since . . .

VILMA [*rises, starts to right*]. I'll go and see whether . . .

SZABO. If you won't let me. . . .

VILMA. Won't let you what?

SZABO. Forgive me—if you'd rather I wouldn't . . . if you won't let me remind you of Georg Szabo.

VILMA [*crosses back*]. Of course I'll let you. . . . Only . . .

SZABO. You don't remember him.

VILMA. That's just it.

SZABO. No, no. Don't be so cold to me. I shall be here for six months, half a year, longer if you want. Six years. . . . Forever.

VILMA. Please . . .

SZABO. Vilma!

VILMA. My husband. . . .

SZABO [*goes up to her, beseechingly*]. Mrs. Kelemen!

VILMA [*crosses left, goes to desk*]. Well, that's better.

SZABO [*follows*]. I am going to be here for six months. I—

VILMA. No, I think you won't—
[*Pause.*]

SZABO. Vilma!

VILMA. Nor even six weeks—six days—nor even six minutes—

SZABO. Are you going to have me put out?

VILMA. No. [*Crosses to back of desk, suddenly formulating her plan.*] It seems that my husband has not had an opportunity to tell you . . .

SZABO. What?

VILMA. That— Perhaps he wanted to tell Dr. Lewicky himself.

SZABO. What?

VILMA [*arranges glasses*]. That he is withdrawing from the affair altogether. He decided that yesterday.

SZABO. He's withdrawing?

VILMA. He didn't tell you because

. . . [*Crosses to right of stool, which is left of desk. Quickly.*]

After a consultation yesterday with some of his associates he came to the conclusion that the prospects were unfavorable. He heard something about the Attaché. . . .

SZABO. But . . .

VILMA. My husband can't tell you his reasons. . . . He is . . .

SZABO. He is in evening dress—you were going to the reception.

VILMA. Because my husband is withdrawing doesn't mean that we can't go to the reception.

[*KELEMEN enters left.*]

KELEMEN. Odenburg on the wire.

VILMA. Yes.

SZABO. Your wife—

[*VILMA stops SZABO with a look.*]

Then crosses to KELEMEN.

VILMA. Don't be angry, dear. I told him. . . .

KELEMEN. What?

VILMA. I know I shouldn't have . . . but he is an old friend . . . and so I told him what you planned to tell Lewicky in the morning. That you were withdrawing from the case. . . .

KELEMEN [*pause*]. Withdrawing?

VILMA. That's what I told him.

KELEMEN [*trying to think it out*]. You told him that?

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN. You told him. . . .

VILMA. That you were withdrawing.

KELEMEN. Yes . . . then . . . er . . . yes.

SZABO [*starts to go*]. I am to understand that I can inform Dr. Lewicky now, by telephone?

KELEMEN. Ye-es. [*With natural voice.*] Yes.

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PARLOR MAID [*entering left*]. The telephone.

SZABO. Then you really want me to tell him?

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN. For the present, only that I am withdrawing—the explanation—

VILMA. By letter to-morrow.

KELEMEN. By letter to-morrow.

SZABO [*shrugs his shoulders*]. I don't see—

KELEMEN. Since my wife has told you, you have only to report it. I will write in the morning.

SZABO. Very well.

[*Exits left. Pause. VILMA crosses to center. KELEMEN follows.*]

VILMA. Yes.

KELEMEN [*gratefully, lovingly*]. I am withdrawing? [*Kneels before VILMA*]. You dear—good—clever—

VILMA. Get up.

[*Lifts him to his feet. Brushes off his trousers. KELEMEN continues to brush his knees. Pause.*]

KELEMEN. And the million?

VILMA. Out the window with it.

KELEMEN. Dear, clever . . . what can I give you . . . how can I thank you? I know . . . by never, never questioning you again?

VILMA. That's all I ask. . . . And, dear, let's not take it so seriously. You don't have to go on your knees and make your voice tremble like that. You know how ridiculous all those silly romantics are. [*Goes to chair and sits at table.*] I don't need any Szabo and I don't need any million. We have managed so far . . . we can go on.

KELEMEN. But perhaps—

VILMA. You don't ask me any-

thing about . . . That's splendid of you.

KELEMEN. But—

VILMA. How noble!

KELEMEN. Only—

VILMA. How considerate of you, how manly, not to ask—

KELEMEN. Well—

VILMA. How tactful, how wise you are—I'll never forget your nobility at this time. Oh, you're too good!

KELEMEN [*after a pause—with sudden decision*]. Well, then—

VILMA. Yes . . . you have changed. Dear, I love you.

KELEMEN. Then at least a little kiss—just a wife's kiss.

[*Starts to kiss.*]

THE MAID [*enters from the right*]. The cook is waiting. . . .

VILMA. Let's end the play-acting—the cook wants to go over the accounts . . . and she shall.

[*MAID comes down a few steps.*]

KELEMEN. What is it?

MAID. Peterl can't go to sleep. He wants his father to tell him the end of the story.

KELEMEN. I'll come. [*MAID goes into the nursery.*] At least give me your hand.

VILMA. Why so solemn? [*She takes up some needlework.*] Nothing has happened—Georg Szabo never came—we're not going to the reception—we're going to stay at home and I'm going to finish the cover for your typewriter.

[*She sews. The MAID opens the door to the nursery.*]

KELEMEN [*goes to door—then turns suddenly*]. And Peterl will sit with us—by his dear sweet mother—and his poor father—and we three—our little family . . .

VILMA [*decisively*]. Our little family will do nothing of the sort . . . the happy father and mother with their little baby in his night shirt! No, my dear, none of that. We're not going to pose for any tableau of the happy home—and we're going to leave the boy in bed. Do you want him to catch another cold?

KELEMEN [*goes into nursery*]. Well—we'll do as mother wants. [*To child.*] Why aren't you asleep?

PETERL. I dreamed of the wolf.

KELEMEN. Of the wolf?

PETERL. The wolf . . . you didn't tell me the end of the story.

KELEMEN. You stupid . . . go to sleep. The end of the story? Well . . . the end is that when the great big wolf came—

[*There is a knock.* KELEMEN stops his story and looks into the room, half hidden by the curtains.]

VILMA. Come in.

[*Rises, crosses to center.*]

SZABO [*enters*]. I telephoned. Dr. Lewicky is dumbfounded.

[*Goes to VILMA.*]

VILMA. He will recover.

PETERL. Tell me some more.

SZABO. What? [*Then he realizes that it was not he that was spoken to—looks at watch.*] Oh! I can catch the 10:50 express back to Odenburg.

VILMA. With no trouble at all.

SZABO. I should like to say good-bye to your husband.

VILMA. I will say good-bye to him for you.

SZABO. Thank you—but—

VILMA. I'll say good-bye for you.

SZABO [*pleading*]. Just one request, Vilma. The last I'll ever make.

VILMA. Well?

SZABO. Seven years ago I wrote you a letter. Now I am leaving and perhaps . . . one never knows . . . I may want to marry some day . . . and if I did . . . well . . . please forgive me . . . but you see it might. . . . Vilma, will you give me back my letter?

VILMA. I haven't got it.

SZABO. You burned it?

VILMA. No.

SZABO. Threw it away?

VILMA. No.

SZABO. Where is it?

VILMA. You have it.

SZABO. I?

VILMA. It's in your right hand coat pocket— [SZABO pulls it out of his pocket.] That's what I wrote the telephone number on. 19726.

SZABO. 19726. Well, good-bye. Please tell your husband. . . .

VILMA. I'll tell him.

[SZABO exits. VILMA crosses to the right. Sews.]

KELEMEN [*suddenly resuming story*]. And the poor man picked up his big gun and Bing! Bang! the wolf ran away—as fast as he could run. [*He comes into the living room. The GOVERNESS closes the door of the nursery.*] Tell me—what did—

VILMA. You're so wise and sensible—you don't ask any questions . . . you go to your desk—[KELEMEN does so]—and you go on with your work. How natural that is.

KELEMEN. But at least . . .

VILMA. And you leave life as it is. You don't try to improve on it. After all life doesn't need any of your family groups and noble speeches. It is beautiful enough as it is.

PARLOR MAID. Mrs. Kelemen . . .
the cook. . . .

VILMA [*rises*]. I'm coming.

[*Puts down her sewing. The housemaid leaves. Outside the door from the bedroom is seen the COOK, with the expense book in her hand. She enters.*]

COOK. I didn't want to come in this way . . . it is so late—

VILMA. That's all right. Let me see it. [*Pause.*] Twenty heller—what's that?

COOK. Spinach.

VILMA. Sixteen heller?

COOK. Rice.

VILMA. Filet, 3 kronen, 70 —
Tse—Tse—

COOK. But the butcher—

VILMA. I know—I know. Cauliflower, 40. Cinnamon, 8. Pepper, 14. Sugar? [*Looks at KELEMEN.*] Go!

COOK. Sugar.

VILMA. Sugar, 12. Cauliflower?—
Oh, that was Monday. Cauliflower, 16. Parsley, 16. What's this?

COOK. Onions.

VILMA. Onions.

[*KELEMEN takes out his handkerchief and is softly sobbing as the curtain falls.*]

CURTAIN

THE WHITE CLOUD

English version by

LOUIS RITTENBERG

Not yet produced in America

CHARACTERS

LT. COLONEL

SENTINEL

LIEUTENANT

CADET

SERGEANT

CORPORAL

FIRST HUSSAR

SECOND HUSSAR

THIRD HUSSAR

FOURTH HUSSAR

FIFTH HUSSAR

SIXTH HUSSAR

BORI

WIDOW

WOMEN, CHILDREN AND HUSSARS

SCENE ONE

[A December night on the Galician front. On the fringe of a depleted birch forest. Dugouts and huts of reserve forces. It is snowing. Gently sloping hillocks are discernible. Everywhere hussars are asleep—some in niches dug in the trench walls, others on straw, or wrapped in blankets. Facing the onlooker is the sentinel, with a flickering fire at his feet. He is wearing a gabardine overcoat. From a great distance comes the sound of soldiers singing in the trenches. This continues softly from

the moment the curtain rises until the second scene begins.

At the rise of curtain there is silence except for the aforesaid singing, the volume of which fluctuates but slightly. Presently, two consecutive flashes of feeble lightning light up the sky far off beyond the hills. A slight pause is followed by two commensurately muffled, almost gently thudding, cannon shots. Then a prolonged pause. After that—

LT. COLONEL with upturned collar, and the ray of a flashlight lighting

his way, enters slowly from the right. Two OFFICERS follow Lt. COLONEL.

SENTINEL *rises and salutes.*

LT. COLONEL [*halts before SENTINEL*]. Where's your commandant?

SENTINEL. I humbly beg to report, sir, he is asleep. [*Just then the commanding LIEUTENANT appears at left.*] I beg to report, sir, he is here already.

LT. COLONEL [*returning LIEUTENANT's salute*]. Hello, there, Barna. What's the good word?

LIEUTENANT. As commandant of the regimental reserves, I beg to report, sir, ninety-four men.

LT. COLONEL. Are your boys well placed?

LIEUTENANT. Any place is good enough for us so long as we can get some sleep.

LT. COLONEL [*surveys the sleeping camp*]. How soundly they sleep.

LIEUTENANT. They well deserve it, sir.

LT. COLONEL. What a corking fight they put up . . . only yesterday morning . . . down near the railroad where their trenches broke through!

SENTINEL. I beg to report, sir, that's what makes them sleep so soundly.

LT. COLONEL. Come. Let's leave them. [*To SENTINEL.*] And you, son, keep an eye on the flames. Don't set the house afire.

SENTINEL [*salutes*]. Yes, sir. At your command, sir!

LT. COLONEL [*to LIEUTENANT*]. Now, Barna, you'd better snatch some sleep, too. You must be all fagged out.

LIEUTENANT. I'll just see you to that big tree, sir . . . until then the world is still mine. . . .

[*Points to the left.* LT. COLONEL *makes for left.* OFFICERS *follow close behind him.* SENTINEL, *at rigid attention, gazes after them, even after they have vanished from sight. Then he sits down at his wonted post, stirs the fire, and lights his pipe. Pause. Two flashes, pause, then twice the cannon roars. The soldiers' singing continues.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

[*Interior of a small peasant room. At the break of dawn in December. A tall heaped bed at right and left. A table and two chairs in the middle of the room. A window at back center and a door at right front.*

At the rise of curtain, the stage is wholly unpeopled, but a moment later two peasant women enter at right. One is called BORI, the other

is a widow. BORI fetches a burning candle, placing it on the table, while the other brings pen and ink, also paper, placing them likewise on the table and preparing herself to write.]

WIDOW. John says that if we get the letter done by seven, he'll take it. It's six o'clock now. I can do it twice over by that time. He'll get to the

depot and then at one-twenty the train will carry it off. There, there, don't you cry, Borika.

BORI. I'm not crying.

[*After some fumbling, brings forth two army postcards.*]

WIDOW [*tests the pen*]. Who says you're not crying? Why, you're always at it. You got the Lt. Colonel's letter yesterday morning and since then you've been crying every minute.

BORI. No, I haven't.

WIDOW. Indeed, you mustn't.

BORI. Didn't *you* cry when your husband fell in battle?

WIDOW. I did at first. But I quit after a while because the children used to cry with me. Then I realized that if I stop it, they'll be quiet, too. Because then they're not hurt by thinking of their father. And so I held myself back until it wore off. That's how children are. Why should I make those four little tots suffer? It's bad enough that they've been left orphans.

BORI. They don't even know what it means.

WIDOW. Mine still keep asking whether their father will ever come back?

BORI. I guess by to-morrow mine will be asking, too. All five of them. What'll I tell them? What's the usual thing at such a time?

WIDOW. We old-time widows usually say just one thing: he'll come back. We also tell them that they'll meet them above the clouds some day.

BORI. Is that what you older widows do?

WIDOW. Just that.

BORI. Above the clouds?

WIDOW. Children like that a lot.

Often I see them standing close together at the foot of the mountain, watching that big white cloud.

BORI [*pensively*]. Is that what old widows say?

WIDOW. Yes.

[*Pause.*]

BORI. How many of you widows are there in the village?

WIDOW. Up till now there were seven of us. Now since yesterday . . . we're eight . . . counting you.

BORI. Were all the others hussars, too?

WIDOW. Every one of them. The men here are all recruited for that. The cavalry gets all the factory workers. But the villagers here are hussars. God bless their memory.

BORI [*walks to the bed at left*]. Sh-h!

WIDOW [*walks to the bed at right*]. They're asleep. Mine, too. [*Returns to her seat at the table.*] Well, then, Borika, let's write it. What's that in your hand?

BORI. This is Peter's last card from the front. And this here is what the Lt. Colonel sent. Did you get the same kind?

WIDOW [*takes the card from BORI*]. Yes. But he writes something different to each one. He says [*Reads.*]: "Dear Madam: With sorrowful heart I beg to inform you that your husband, my brave hussar, Peter Gyetvai, died a heroic death yesterday. He was shot in the heart in the course of an attack while fighting for his king and country. We buried my good poor soldier a hundred and fifty paces from the swarm line. We found neither money nor valuables on him. But his Fatherland will be grateful for this sacrifice of one of its brave sons and the Almighty will comfort

his widow and orphans. I pray for the blessings of God upon the family of this hero. (Signed) Coloman Nagy de Szentkirály, Lt. Colonel of Hussars, Regimental Commandant." Don't you cry, Borika.

BORI. I'm not crying.

WIDOW [*seizes the pen*]. We're in the habit of answering nicely.

BORI. Is that what widows do?

WIDOW. Yes.

BORI. What about the ones who can't write?

WIDOW. They do just like you. They get some one else to write for them. I wrote Julia Csépi's letter, too. [*Aloud, stressing every syllable, she writes.*] "December twenty-fourth, nineteen-hundred and fifteen . . ."

BORI. Say that we were very fond of him.

WIDOW. That's not the way. [*Still stressing every syllable.*] "I begin these lines . . . Blessed be . . ."

BORI. Surely, it can't hurt to say we loved him.

WIDOW [*in syllables*]. . . . blessed be the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the holiest sanctuary, forever. . . ."

BORI. Amen.

WIDOW [*writes*]. "Amen."

BORI. Now say that we loved him.

[*Throughout the dictation, the widow consistently, almost cruelly, writes whatever she sees fit, regardless of the other's wishes.*]

WIDOW [*writes, enunciating every syllable*]. "I wish to God that these few lines of mine . . ."

BORI. 'Cause he was a good man.

WIDOW. . . . "find you, brave sir, in the best of health and happiness."

We usually also call him "Honorable and brave Lt. Colonel."

BORI. Well, then, say that I thank him for his card.

WIDOW. That's allowed. [*Writes.*] "I thank you for the few lines. . . ."

BORI. He was my unforgettable kind and true partner.

WIDOW. "Your heartfelt kindness in telling me about . . ."

BORI. My handsome, precious mate, apple of my eye. . . .

WIDOW. ". . . his burial."

BORI. "My true good mate." Did you put that in?

WIDOW. I will—"my true good mate . . ." "for telling me about his funeral. . . ."

BORI. My handsome, brave body . . . my violet blue eyes. . . .

WIDOW. That doesn't belong there. Only "my true good mate."

BORI [*beseechingly*]. My blue eyes.

WIDOW. We don't say that.

BORI. Don't widows say that?

WIDOW. No. Only like this—"I thank you for your fatherly kindness."

BORI. Write that I wish I had died right there with my dear, true mate. . . .

WIDOW [*in syllables*]. ". . . your fatherly kindness."

BORI. I wish I could rest in the same cold ground with him out there in Galicia.

WIDOW. ". . . kindness."

BORI. Aren't you really writing what I said?

WIDOW. We write . . . [*Recites in full what she intends to write.*]—" . . . thanks for the fatherly kindness which, as his commandant, you have shown toward my lamented husband all his life." The priest once told us to put it like that, and since

then that's what we've been writing. [Writes.] "which you have shown toward my lamented husband . . ."

BORI. Say that from now on all burdens are mine . . . and all bur . . .

WIDOW. "... toward my lamented husband . . ."

BORI. His last postcard is being guarded in our prayer-book . . . it and the one that came day before yesterday is sewn together with two pieces of black thread.

WIDOW [writes]. "... all his life . . ."

BORI. The one in which he says [Reads the postcard by the candle-light.] "My darling children, we are dressed in silver and gold, and in flowers, as we charge against the Russians. Flags are flying and the band's playing."

WIDOW [writes relentlessly]. "... all his life . . ."

BORI. Aren't you going to say that either?

WIDOW. No, Bori dear, only what we usually say . . . "which, as his beloved commandant . . ."

BORI. Well, then, say that for Christmas I sent him a package. By military post number 380. It was full of white sugar, tobacco, postcards, onions, liniment, pancakes . . . tell them not to send it back but to give it to the rest of the hussars.

WIDOW. "... beloved commandant . . ." They'll do that anyway.

BORI. Well, then, write, "We read his many letters with tears in our eyes."

WIDOW. That's allowed. [Writes.] "We read his many letters. . . ."

BORI. And there's no comforting us . . .

WIDOW. "... his letters." You

mustn't say that there's no comforting. "... his letters . . ."

BORI. Why mustn't I?

WIDOW. Because the good Lord comforts all widows and orphans . . . "with tears in our eyes . . ."

BORI. Does He comfort us?

WIDOW. You mustn't offend the Colonel. . . . "with tears in our eyes." And then we write: "I find comfort in the upbringing of my five children and in the mercy of the good Lord."

BORI. All right, then, say that.

WIDOW. "I find comfort . . ."

BORI. You might also say—"but I'll never see another happy day . . ."

WIDOW. "... in the upbringing of my five chi-i-ld-ren . . ." Don't you cry, Bori.

BORI. I'm not crying. They don't hear us now. [Glances at the bed.] They're asleep.

WIDOW. "... in the up-bring-ing . . . and . . ."

BORI. Who'll take the place of their father?

[By a motion of her hand urges the Widow to put that in the letter.]

WIDOW. "... and in the mercy of the goo-oo-d . . ."

BORI. Who'll take the place of their father?

WIDOW. "... the mercy of the goo-oo-d Lord."

BORI. [somewhat rebelliously]. Write what I tell you. Let him answer it. Who will take the place of their father?

WIDOW. "... of the good Lord." [In a louder tone.] "I'll . . . take the place . . . of their father . . . till . . . they . . . meet him again . . . see him again . . . up there . . ."

[Just then a wide-eyed youngster

sticks his head out from under the cover of the bed at right and looks down at the two women inquisitively.]

BORI. Say it like this—"Till they meet their handsome brave father up there."

[Two tiny heads peep out from the bed at left.]

WIDOW. "till . . . up there . . . they will see . . . again their . . . dear handsome . . . brave . . . husband father . . ."

[Another juvenile head emerges from the bed at right.]

BORI. Till . . . up there . . . above . . . the . . . white cloud . . .

WIDOW *[writes]*. "Up . . . above . . . the . . . white . . . cloud . . ."

[Two more children appear in the bed at right.]

BORI. . . all of . . . us . . . meet . . .

WIDOW. ". . . till . . . all of us . . . meet . . ."

[In quick succession three more children appear in the bed at left.]

WIDOW. ". . . all of us . . . who have loved each other . . . here on earth . . ." There . . . that'll do nicely.

[Motionless, all the children gaze in bewilderment down into the candlelight and at the two women. They are unseen by the latter.]

BORI *[fairly startled]*. Aren't you going to say any more?

WIDOW. We're not used to writing any more than that.

BORI. Why not? Why only this much? *[Exceedingly moved.]* You ought to put in . . . he should know . . . that . . . my man did his duty . . . they mustn't expect any more of him . . . he's given them all he had.

. . . He was a poor man. . . . He had no valuables. . . . But he did his duty just the same . . . we have nothing more to give . . .

WIDOW *[while writing]*. They know that, Bori dear, without you telling them.

BORI. They had better know.

[A knock on the door. Outside it is dawning. During the ensuing conversation the children, one by one, creep back under their covers.]

BORI. Who is it?

A VOICE. The postman.

WIDOW. All right, uncle John. We'll be done in a minute. *[Writes.]*—"And now I will close my letter and remain respectfully yours, Mrs. Peter (Barbara) Gyetvai, widow."

[Another knock on the door.]

WIDOW. I'll be right with you. I just want to put the address on.

BORI *[extends one of the postcards to her]*. Here . . . the address is on this.

WIDOW. We widows of the old Ninth know it by heart. "To the Right Honorable and brave Coloman Nagy de Szentkirály, Lt. Colonel, Military Post number 380."

[BORI takes the finished letter and carries it outside.]

WIDOW. Be sure not to smear it.

[Gathers up the writing materials and follows BORI. Exit. The sun is rising. The room is growing lighter. Pause. The children, one after the other, again stick their heads out from the beds; first those in the bed at right, then the others.]

SERGEANT'S SON *[calls to those in the other bed]*. Didn't I always tell you? My father is up there on the

cloud. You wouldn't believe me.

CORPORAL'S SON [*in the other bed*]. Not only your father. Mine's there, too.

SERGEANT'S SON. Yours is there, too, and so is mine.

CORPORAL'S SON. That's because all the hussars are there.

SERGEANT'S SON. They wrote on the paper . . . yes, they wrote on the paper . . . we could see our fathers. . . . It's in the letter . . .

[*Pause. They stare at each other with wide-open eyes.*]

THIRD CHILD. They wrote that anybody going up to the cloud can see his father.

CORPORAL'S SON. But how're you goin' to get up there?

THIRD CHILD. From the top of the mountain.

SERGEANT'S SON. But maybe he isn't on that cloud at all.

THIRD CHILD. Oh, yes he is. 'Cause that's our cloud. It's always there on top of the mountain. That's where it belongs. Yes, it's always there.

[CORPORAL'S SON *climbers off the bed.*]

SERGEANT'S SON. Where are you crawling?

CORPORAL'S SON [*with much mysteriousness*]. Let's right now go up on the mountain . . . and from there to the cloud . . . nobody'll see us now . . .

[*Two others are now in the act of crawling off the bed. They start to dress.*]

SERGEANT'S SON [*having climbed off the bed*]. Come on . . . up to my father . . .

[*All climb off. The hubbub of hurried dressing.*]

THIRD CHILD. Pst! Somebody's coming.

[*They huddle together.*]

THIRD CHILD. Aw, no! It's nobody!

[*They resume dressing feverishly and in silence.*]

SERGEANT'S SON. Wonder what father'll say when he sees me?

CORPORAL'S SON. He'll kiss you.

THIRD CHILD. He won't say a word 'cause he can't . . . 'cause he died.

SERGEANT'S SON. No, he didn't die. My father fell fightin'.

THIRD CHILD. Just the same, he died.

SERGEANT'S SON. Then why didn't they put him in the graveyard?

THIRD CHILD. 'Cause all the hussars go up to the cloud . . . when they die. . . . That's what they wrote in the letter. . . . Till we meet again . . . that's what it said. . . .

[*Absolute silence. Pause. The children grow pensive. Then slowly they tiptoe out of the room. The last one blows out the candle. A crimson sun invades the room. For a short while the room remains empty—and silent.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE THREE

[On the outskirts of the village. Two or three houses. It is growing lighter. A serpentine-like road leads to a tall mountain in the background. Three segments of this road are visible, rising above each other; the nethermost runs from left to right, the one in the middle from right to left, while the topmost inclines from left to right. The latter is the steepest of the three and reaches into the very clouds that cloak the peak of the rugged mountain. Patches of snow.]

At the rise of curtain, seven of the nine children previously introduced steal in at right. They enter the houses, two going into one, one into another and two more into a third house. The other two run away at left. Presently, the two missing ones enter at right, accompanied by three additional children. Those in the houses now stealthily emerge, bringing others with them. The two that had run away at left also return. These, too, bring new children. There are altogether twenty-seven of them. They speak in whispers, and for quite a while, standing in a closely huddled group at the foot of the mountain, they keep pointing upward.]

THIRD CHILD. On that cloud?

[Points to the mountain top.]

SERGEANT'S SON. That's the one.

[All others now gather about the two speakers and continue to converse in an undertone, but soon they all burst into loud talk.]

SERGEANT'S SON. Be still! You mustn't talk. Nobody. Not a word.

There you did it! You hollered and now my mother's here.

[The WIDOW and BORI enter at right.]

WIDOW. I told you they're at the foot of the hill again.

BORI. They're looking at the cloud. [To the children.] What made you come out so early?

CORPORAL'S SON. Oh, we came out just like that!

[Gradually, the children draw away toward the mountain.]

Two other women emerge from two of the houses.]

WIDOW. What are you all doing here?

SERGEANT'S SON. We're going up the mountain.

WIDOW. All of you?

SERGEANT'S SON. Yes, just as we are.

WIDOW. And what'll you be doing up there?

[Three more women enter at left.]

SERGEANT'S SON. We'll just be there.

WIDOW. What are you going up for?

SERGEANT'S SON. Just to be there.

WIDOW. Answer me. What are you going up for?

SERGEANT'S SON [tearfully]. Just because!

WIDOW. Stop bawling. Why, I haven't even touched you. Answer my question. What are you children after up on the mountain?

[Two more women enter. And two more from house three.]

THIRD CHILD. We're looking for my father.

[Prolonged pause.]

SERGEANT'S SON. They said . . . they wrote . . . we could see him up there . . . he's on the cloud . . .

THIRD CHILD. 'Cause all the Magyar hussars are up there. Yes'm.

BORI. Let them go up . . . the poor dears.

SERGEANT'S SON [*to WIDOW*]. Let's go up there, mother, dear!

WIDOW [*to BORI*]. And why should they? If they go up, it'll be so much the worse. . . . Then . . . then . . .

SERGEANT'S SON [*stubbornly*]. Let's go up there, mother, dear!

BORI [*to the children*]. But going to the mountain isn't enough. . . . You've got to climb up to the cloud, too!

SERGEANT'S SON. Let's go up there, mother, dear.

A WOMAN. Let them. [*To the children.*] And don't forget to pray when you get to the cross up there. Then you can come down again.

ANOTHER WOMAN [*tucks the scarf around her child's neck*]. But go slowly. Don't run.

WIDOW. All right, then, I don't mind your going up. And stop to pray at the cross. Then rest a while and come back.

SERGEANT'S SON. Let's go up the cloud, too.

WIDOW. If . . . if you can . . . you may go up.

BORI [*adjusts her children's clothes*]. Let them go . . . they won't bother me so much after that.

[*Some of the women tighten the scarfs around their children's necks, others pull the caps down over their ears.*]

A WOMAN. Go up the cloud, too, if you can.

SERGEANT'S SON. Is it allowed?

BORI. Yes.

SERGEANT'S SON. Will I see my father there?

BORI. If you get up there.

[*Several of the children begin to sing. They are on their way. Now all of them sing, their voices being heard until the curtain is lowered and even beyond that. As they are singing, slowly, as a miniature procession, they file off the stage at left. The women, crowded into one group, gaze after them. No one cries. Meanwhile, other women arrive. After all the children have departed—*]

A THIRD WOMAN [*just arrived*]. Where are the children going?

BORI. Let the poor dears go. . . . They say they're going up the mountain, and from there to the cloud, and then to the sky, where they'll see their fathers . . . so they say. And so we must let them have their way . . . let them go at last. . . .

[*The children, proceeding from left to right, appear upon the first road segment. With songs on their lips, they climb upward.*]

A WOMAN. There they go.

[*All the women gather in the middle of the stage.*]

BORI. Let them go up once.

[*A number of women wave to the children, who, in turn, wave back. Then, passing to the left, they vanish from sight. They sing. At the same time three other women enter at left.*]

A NEWCOMER. What sort of singing is that? A procession?

ANOTHER WOMAN. The children . . . they're going up. . . .

[*Softly she explains everything to the newcomer. Now the children appear upon the second road segment and, singing, they pass from right to left. The organ is now heard playing softly. The women who a moment ago had involuntarily moved in the same direction as the children up on the mountain, now slowly accompany them from right to left, reaching the left end of the stage at about the same time as the children pass out of sight at left above. The singing continues and the organ increases in volume, but does not break into full pitch until the children's procession appears upon the topmost segment of the road, passing from left to right. In the rays of the rising sun, the big cloud begins to glow a golden yellow, then a scarlet hue, becoming more and more glaring. As if panic-stricken, the women halt and crowd into one group at left. Now the children appear upon the topmost segment of the road, entering at left. This section is virtually immersed in clouds, so that the children, too, appear to be walking through clouds. Now and then one or more of them even disappear for an instant among the misty filament; but as a whole, they are constantly visible. The singing and the organ now burst into crescendo. Slowly the women now head for the*

middle of the mountain, stopping close at the foot of it, with their backs to the audience. All look heavenward.]

BORI [*transported*]. Look! Women! . . . they're walking in the clouds already.

WIDOW [*bewildered, in a trembling voice*]. They're going into the clouds!

A WOMAN [*aloud*]. Lord Jesus! they're going into the clouds! . . .

[*The entire group moves slowly close to the foot of the mountain.*]

BORI [*in an exalted, solemn voice*]. Oh, women . . . women . . . a miracle is happening! . . . Orphaned children are going to their fathers! . . .

[*All fall on their knees at the foot of the mountain. The sun beats down upon the cloud; the cloud and the children are increasingly radiant. Down below, a mist hovers over the group of women. The mountain top, with its cloud and children, is ablaze with a celestial glamour. The human song seems intensified, as if ten times as many children were singing; the organ thunders its accompaniment. The mountain top is aglow and reverberates the music of voice and organ. Huddled together, kneeling, the women bow their heads.*]

CURTAIN

[*After the curtain has been lowered, while shifting scenery, the sound of song and organ continue, but ever more dimly: the children are ascending.*]

SCENE FOUR

[Atop the white cloud, beneath the azure infinite. From afar come soft strains of unceasing music. A glare of light.]

Entering at right, walking hand-in-hand, come HUSSARS NUMBER TWO and THREE. Their faces are wreathed in blissful tranquillity. They converse in a calm undertone, without stopping, as they cross the scene. All the hussars are bare-headed.]

SECOND HUSSAR. Let us walk quietly on this lovely white cloud.

THIRD HUSSAR. The soft white cloud of fallen heroes . . . it's like white velvet.

SECOND HUSSAR. Just let us walk quietly on it.

THIRD HUSSAR. My heart is lighter to-day than it was yesterday.

SECOND HUSSAR. Slowly but surely, it will grow calm.

THIRD HUSSAR. I hardly feel the bullet in my heart now.

SECOND HUSSAR. There, there . . . let us walk gently and joyously . . . on this lovely soft cloud. Come, dear comrade, let us walk about.

[They walk off at left. A momentary pause, after which, not unlike the others, come the FOURTH and FIFTH HUSSAR.]

FOURTH HUSSAR. That little angel said—"You boys lay in the cold mud, but here you will get dry. You used to shiver in the sleet, but here you will warm yourselves."

FIFTH HUSSAR. Our lieutenant used to lie out there, too. And our lieutenant was cold, too.

FOURTH HUSSAR. And said the angel—"You fine hussars were hungry and thirsty out there."

FIFTH HUSSAR. So was our captain.

FOURTH HUSSAR. Then the angel also said—"you received bullets in your foreheads, bayonets in your hearts. But now every Magyar soldier will surely get well."

FIFTH HUSSAR. Our Honorable Colonel was buried, too.

[They exit at left. In the preceding manner, there come now, at right, SERGEANT, CORPORAL, and HUSSAR NUMBER ONE.]

FIRST HUSSAR. They wanted to slice up our beautiful Hungary . . . but didn't succeed.

CORPORAL. Down below Homonna they left their bones in the snow.

[FIRST HUSSAR suddenly stops and points to the rear. In the distance, behind the mists of a cloud, there appears an angel, swiftly advancing toward the soldiers. All three come to a halt.]

FIRST HUSSAR. Let's stop a minute. *[Using his hands as a visor he gazes at the oncoming angel.]* Look, old pal. You, too, Sergeant . . . sir . . . look over there awhile.

SERGEANT *[looks]*. An angel.

CORPORAL. A white one.

FIRST HUSSAR *[carried away]*. Sergeant . . . sir . . . an angel!

SERGEANT. What are you hollering for? I see it.

FIRST HUSSAR. I'm just telling you. *[They all look.]* It's coming toward us.

CORPORAL. Yes, toward us.

[The angel hurries in their direction, then stops at some distance, frightened. Thereupon,

the three hussars, with much clicking of heels and jangling of spurs, stand at rigid attention.]

ANGEL [*timidly pointing at them, asks*]. Are you hussars? [*Silence. No answer. Still timorously, the ANGEL draws nearer*]. I'm looking for the hussars. Can you tell me where to find them?

[*Pause.*]

CORPORAL. That's what they call us.

ANGEL. You? Magyar hussars?

CORPORAL. Certainly not Germans.

[*The ANGEL steps up closer to them.*]

ANGEL [*incredulously*]. Are you really hussars?

SERGEANT. I beg to report I am Andreas Csépi, Sergeant, and that it is really us. Until December twelfth we were the hussars of His Majesty, the King; since the dawn of that day, the hussars of God.

[*Silence.*]

ANGEL. I . . . I have never yet seen hussars. That is why I am asking you. I have news for them . . . for you. Dear Lord . . . is this what they are like . . . the hussars? I imagined them to be altogether different . . .

[*Silence. Pause.*]

CORPORAL. Me, too.

[*Silence. Pause.*]

FIRST HUSSAR [*transported*]. An angel.

[*Silence. Pause.*]

ANGEL. Dear . . . kind . . . dead Magyar hussars . . . you are not young.

SERGEANT. May I humbly report, we are of the levied troops.

ANGEL. I thought you to be more handsome.

CORPORAL. No, we are not that.

SERGEANT. But we are good, if I may humbly say so.

ANGEL. Why do you stand so rigidly?

CORPORAL. As a matter of honor.

SERGEANT. At ease!

[*They relax, with heads bowed.*]

ANGEL. I am so happy . . . to see you at last . . . you good hussars. How gentle all of you are.

SERGEANT. Bullets were fired into our hearts, lovely angel. That's what made us so gentle.

ANGEL. But . . . but . . . don't you ride horses?

CORPORAL [*boldly*]. No.

SERGEANT [*looks admonishingly at CORPORAL; then softly*]. No . . . dear angel.

ANGEL. Foot soldiers?

[*No answer. Silence. FIRST HUSSAR nods his head in the affirmative. SERGEANT and CORPORAL droop their heads, abashed and fidgety.*]

ANGEL. And what about . . . the flowers? Where are they?

SERGEANT. Lovely white angel, the flowers have withered.

ANGEL. I suppose you are walking together because you died together.

SERGEANT. Yes, the three of us . . . and . . . [*Points left.*] . . . those two over there . . . and the two on yonder cloud in the distance . . . altogether seven of us, all in the same hour of the same day . . . [*Gazes about, points to right.*] . . . That one over there is all alone, he died later. Separately.

ANGEL. I hope you will not be angry that I am so inquisitive. But I have heard so much about you men. Tell me please . . . was it really necessary that you die?

CORPORAL. Yes.

ANGEL. What for?

CORPORAL. For the land.

ANGEL. For the land?

CORPORAL. That's right.

ANGEL. You mean you . . . had to defend the land?

CORPORAL. That's what we did.

ANGEL. Which land?

CORPORAL. That there down below. You can still see it over the rim. It's the land . . . on this side of the mountain.

ANGEL. Who lives there?

CORPORAL. Hungarians. [*Pause.*] That's the land we defended.

ANGEL [*to SERGEANT*]. You, too?

SERGEANT. Yes.

ANGEL [*to FIRST HUSSAR*]. You, too?

FIRST HUSSAR. Me, too.

ANGEL. They tried to take it away, did they?

SERGEANT. But they didn't.

[*Silence.*]

ANGEL. Is there much of that land?

SERGEANT. Oh, yes, ever so much. And it's good land, too.

ANGEL [*to SERGEANT*]. How much of it belonged to you? [*Silence.*] I asked how much of the land was yours?

SERGEANT. I beg to say, I hadn't any land at all.

ANGEL. Well, then . . . what did . . . you die for?

SERGEANT. For the land . . . I beg to say.

ANGEL [*to CORPORAL*]. You . . . who are older . . . you surely had some?

CORPORAL [*abashed*]. No, I hadn't.

ANGEL. Why are you all so ashamed of not having had land?

SERGEANT. I'm not ashamed.

CORPORAL. I certainly am ashamed. But the fact is I hadn't any.

ANGEL. And how about you?

FIRST HUSSAR. How could I have any . . . me . . . a poor servant?

ANGEL. What were you?

FIRST HUSSAR. Begging your pardon, a shepherd.

ANGEL [*tenderly*]. You mean you watched over sheep?

FIRST HUSSAR [*with overflowing affection*]. Two thousand lambkins.

ANGEL. Were they all yours?

FIRST HUSSAR. No, they all belonged to the master. But they loved me.

ANGEL. Not their master?

FIRST HUSSAR. Indeed not. Because they loved me.

ANGEL. Who watches them now?

FIRST HUSSAR. An elderly fellow. But they don't love him, either. They only loved me.

ANGEL. You say you had no land. Well, then, for whose land did you die?

FIRST HUSSAR. Just for the land.

ANGEL. But whose land was it?

FIRST HUSSAR [*greatly embarrassed*]. Mr. Corporal, please say something to that.

CORPORAL. And whose was the black river Tisza? You see, a lot of them bit the dust for it, too, up in the Marmaros sector. [*Pause.*] Whose was it, I ask you?

SERGEANT. Everybody's. Our forefathers'. Just like the land.

ANGEL. But why . . . why did you have no share in it?

[*Silence.*]

SERGEANT. That's more than I can say.

[*Silence.*]

ANGEL. Did you die at home?

SERGEANT. No; in Galicia. There's some very fine land there, too.

CORPORAL. Fat, black land. Beautiful land.

ANGEL. And . . . wherever the land is fine . . . beautiful, black land . . . there must one die?

SERGEANT. Only where there's honor. That's where one must die.

CORPORAL. It may be even rocks. Or rivers. It's honor that counts.

ANGEL. Well . . . but is there such a thing . . . honor . . . everywhere?

SERGEANT. Yes, lovely little white angel, there was every place we went.

ANGEL. And . . . did you always know where you were going? . . . When you started out . . . did you know where you were bound?

SERGEANT. When we started out?

[*Looks inquiringly at the other two.*]

ANGEL. Yes.

SERGEANT. You mean when we got on the steamer?

FIRST HUSSAR. Nobody told us where we were going.

SERGEANT. Nobody told us. Not even the officers knew where the train was taking us. Maybe only the Colonel knew.

FIRST HUSSAR [*shakes his head negatively*].

SERGEANT. They say that not even he knew. Because nobody tells him, either. That's the way it's done. Kept secret. We just sang. Then the train was rushing and we came to a station, then to another. . . . Every place crowds of people came out and brought buckets full of wine. And threw flowers at us. And played music. Gave us to eat. And there were flags . . . a lot of flags. But none of the people there knew where

we were going, either. They just sang. And the music played. And we sang, too. They hurrahed. And we just rolled on, but didn't know where. . . . Then, as the crowds disappeared behind us . . . out there far behind the embankments, where those tall telegraph poles are . . . there in the wide, empty field stood a tiny little old woman. . . . [*Indicates it on his finger.*] A little granny that big . . . all alone. Well, she . . . put her hands together like this [*Demonstrates.*] and cried out, there, alone, in the field . . . but so bitterly. . . . And as I . . . now think back of those beautiful days . . . the heaps of red flowers and . . . how they sang and played music . . . and the many flags . . . I would say . . . maybe that whole sea of people didn't know . . . only that little old woman out in the field . . . only she knew where we were going.

[*Protracted silence.*]

ANGEL. And here you will find your glowing heavenly reward.

SERGEANT. We didn't do it to be rewarded. We just did it.

CORPORAL. We asked for nothing in return.

[*Silence.*]

ANGEL [*looks at them*]. I see I have made you all sad. I was wrong to ask you about things that cause you pain.

SERGEANT. There shouldn't be anything that could hurt us here.

[*Silence.*]

ANGEL [*to the FIRST HUSSAR*]. You are the saddest.

FIRST HUSSAR. No, I'm not. I'm only thinking. Because . . . lovely little white angel . . . if it won't hurt you . . . I'd like to tell the truth. . . .

ANGEL. Indeed not! Go right ahead.

FIRST HUSSAR. Shall I?

ANGEL. Tell it . . . without fear!

FIRST HUSSAR. Don't be angry at me . . . a poor plain servant . . . a private . . . I hardly know how to say it . . . but it is like this . . . any little questions . . . may be out of place now. Because a man . . . answers honestly . . . Besides, we are soldiers . . . so why should we hesitate . . . if the questions are well meant . . . But not yet . . . because . . . no matter what it may be . . . we still feel pain . . . here and there . . . a little bit of it every place. . . . Of course, begging your pardon, it will all pass away in time . . . that's why we are here. . . . All who have been up here on the cloud for some time . . . like, for instance, the recruits . . . they say . . . this'll pass away with time, you know . . . This big cloud on which we stand . . . this has been going higher and higher. You can feel it slowly rising farther and farther away from the ground . . . as we look down, the mountain and rivers all are smaller and smaller . . . and as we go upward . . . a fellow's heart grows lighter and lighter . . . all the sadness slowly leaves us . . . what used to hurt us yesterday, why . . . we'll . . . hardly feel by to-morrow. . . . But the cloud rises much too slowly . . . it'll take a long time . . . we're still too near . . . to the beginning . . . but I guess . . . our hearts will be all cleaned out some day. . . . Like wine . . . it takes time . . . a long time . . . but as we keep going up slowly . . . we become lighter . . . happier . . . sweeter . . . and so everything has its time. . . . Only

that now we are still too near to the things down below . . . So, lovely little white angel, please don't be angry . . . but I'd rather we wouldn't question each other. Let's not . . . not now . . . torment each other, because you know . . . darling little angel . . . and please don't be angry . . . it is easy enough to . . . ask . . . but, oh, so very hard to answer . . . so please don't be angry . . . please . . . at the poor shepherd . . . just let's wait. . . . This is all I wanted to say.

[*Protracted silence.*]

ANGEL. I bring peace to you, old hussars . . . and blessings. . . . [*The three soldiers kneel down. The ANGEL strokes the SERGEANT's head.*] How many gray hairs you have already!

SERGEANT. I have a family of five back home. Four children. One is a girl.

ANGEL. Children, did you say. [*Exclaims.*] Oh! Didn't I tell you? Oh, inquisitive angel that I am. Here I keep talking . . . while I should be telling you! . . . Did I not say that I had news for you? Why . . . this is the news I have . . . for you . . . good hussars—[*Softly.*]—the children are coming. . . .

[*The soldiers raise their heads.*

The first one rises.]

FIRST HUSSAR. The children?

[*The other two also rise.*]

CORPORAL. What kind of children?

ANGEL. Your children.

SERGEANT. And they're coming here?

ANGEL. Yes, here. . . . Don't be angry that I have not told you until now . . . but I was so surprised by you. . . . Yes, they are coming here

... by the grace of the Lord. . . . They are coming to visit you. . . . Then in the evening they will return home. . . .

SERGEANT. They're coming here?

ANGEL. Yes, here. [SECOND and THIRD HUSSARS *enter slowly at left.*] I saw them as I was hurrying this way . . . I saw them coming up a mountain . . . They are coming very slowly . . . but surely.

[SIXTH HUSSAR *enters at right.*]

FIRST HUSSAR [*to* SECOND, THIRD, and SIXTH HUSSARS]. The children are coming.

SECOND HUSSAR. Whose?

FIRST HUSSAR. Yours, too.

THIRD HUSSAR. Coming here?

FIRST HUSSAR [*points to* ANGEL]. The angel just told us.

SIXTH HUSSAR. Coming here?

FIRST HUSSAR. Yes, for a visit. To their fathers. [*Calls out at left, almost tearfully.*] Here, old levied hussars . . . listen . . . the children are coming!

[*Embraces the HUSSAR standing nearest to him and falls on his bosom.* FOURTH and FIFTH HUSSARS, bewildered, *enter in haste at left.*]

ANGEL. I saw them coming up the mountain . . . Poor things, they took such small steps . . . until they reached the clouds . . . And I saw them entering the clouds . . . a cloud nicely picked them up and so now they are soaring . . . slowly soaring on the cloud . . . they are coming . . . like on a beautiful white boat.

FOURTH HUSSAR. The children?

FIFTH HUSSAR. Mine, too?

ANGEL. All of yours . . . every one of them. [*Silence. The HUSSARS bow their heads.*] Are you not glad?

SERGEANT. Of course we are. Only . . .

ANGEL. Only what?

SERGEANT. I don't quite know. . . . [*Surveys himself.*] Children picture it to be different.

ANGEL. What?

SERGEANT. We used to tell them and write home such beautiful things. And now . . . to find it like this.

ANGEL. Oh . . . but does that matter?

SERGEANT. To a child? Whose father was a hussar? Yes, indeed.

ANGEL [*amazed*]. Lord . . .

CORPORAL. In the village . . . it is different all right.

FIRST HUSSAR. Quick . . . the . . . swords . . . we ought to put them on at least.

CORPORAL. What's the good of that?

[*Silence. They are flustered.*]

ANGEL. Forgive me for not starting with this . . . but I must get along now . . . I will tell the others, too . . . in a hurry. . . . Good hussars, may God bless you!

[*All of them stand at rigid attention and, with "eyes to the right," gaze after the angel until she has disappeared through her place of entry.*]

SERGEANT [*to* SIXTH HUSSAR]. Quick, run and get the cadet.

[*Pushes him out.* SIXTH HUSSAR *dashes out at left.*]

FIRST HUSSAR [*to* SERGEANT]. Sir . . . I'm saying it only . . . because . . . it makes a poor ordinary shepherd like me feel good . . . that a little angel talks so sweetly to him . . . you can see at a glance . . . who you're dealing with. . . .

[*CADET enters at left, with the SIXTH HUSSAR behind him.*]

SIXTH HUSSAR *now slinks back to the other soldiers, who snap into attention.*]

CADET. What do you boys want of me?

SERGEANT. I beg to report, sir, six dead hussars and myself.

CADET. At ease. . . . [*They relax into "at ease."*] And always be at ease. All of us have come here to rest. We need plenty of rest.

CORPORAL. We never complained, sir.

FIRST HUSSAR. I beg to report, sir, they say our children are on the way here.

CORPORAL. Yes, on the way here.

CADET. Oh . . . I know all about it. In fact, I thought they were here already.

FIRST HUSSAR. But, I beg to report, sir . . . there's trouble.

CADET. What trouble?

FIRST HUSSAR. Maybe the sergeant will . . .

[*Looks at SERGEANT. Pause.*]

CADET. Well, what is it?

SERGEANT. You, sir, may not even know . . . or realize it . . . because you were so young when you came from below . . . how the children take things in the village. . . . Take me, for instance. . . . I, too . . . while I could . . . used to tell my tots all sorts of stories. . . .

CADET. What about?

SERGEANT [*disconcerted*]. About a hussar's life.

FIRST HUSSAR. And we used to write home . . . this and that and . . .

CORPORAL. About the horses. . . . They'll be looking for them the first thing.

FIFTH HUSSAR. And now they'll see us like this.

SERGEANT. Back home . . . the village . . . thinks . . . that . . .

[*He is stuck.*]

CADET. Thinks what?

SERGEANT [*quietly, fairly abashed*]. It's all bugles and flowers . . . shiny swords . . . colored shawls . . . flags . . . and gold trappings. . . .

CADET. That's too bad. . . . The hussar's real worth is right in his heart, not in his outfit.

FIRST HUSSAR. Yes, sir, we know all that well enough, but it's no use telling that to those little Hungarians.

CORPORAL. How can I tell them that I fell on foot, and in the mud?

FIRST HUSSAR. Or that we lived in a ditch? And that we had spades in our hands when they ordered us to charge.

CADET. Well, now . . . as for the swords . . . you did bring those with you. . . .

[*Meanwhile the SIXTH HUSSAR fetches three rusty swords.*]

SIXTH HUSSAR. Shall I bring yours, too, sir?

CADET. I have no child. . . .

[*FOURTH and FIFTH HUSSARS fuss with swords.*]

SERGEANT. Aren't there some flowers?

FIRST HUSSAR. It's been a long time since we've had that!

SERGEANT. And flags.

FIRST HUSSAR. That, too!

[*From afar comes the sound of children singing. SECOND and THIRD HUSSARS, who had been standing in the rear during the last few sentences, peering downward, now turn and come forward.*]

SECOND and THIRD HUSSARS [*in unison*]. They're coming!

FOURTH HUSSAR [*to SIXTH HUSSAR*]. Take them away. It's too late.

[*SIXTH HUSSAR carries out the three swords, returning immediately. Pause. They are listening to the singing. The CADET now, as all through the ensuing incidents, stands quite apart, with arms folded, watching the scene. He is entirely alone.*]

FIRST HUSSAR. I'm afraid of only one thing. That my little girl will say: "Tell us a story, father, dear." That'll be my finish, because if I only went to the fair in the next village, I had to tell her stories for two days without stopping.

[*The soldiers place their hands upon each other's shoulders. With the swelling of song, they bow their heads. In the rear the children's little procession gradually appears behind a veil of mist. The youngsters are singing in thin, tired voices. As they enter, the singing stops. They gaze all about them and whisper: "Oh, how pretty . . . oh, how beautiful." Then they suddenly espy their fathers. One speaks up: "Father, dear." They merely point from one to the other, but dare not run forward. Then suddenly one of the children shrieks out: "Father, dear!" Now all of them break into a run toward the group of HUSSARS, who receive them with open arms, but do not go forward to meet them. The SERGEANT has five children, the CORPORAL four. FIRST HUSSAR has one pudgy little girl. The SECOND has three, while the*

◆ THE WHITE CLOUD

THIRD has five, the FOURTH, four, and the FIFTH, two. The SIXTH has three. Altogether twenty-seven children—boys and girls.]

CHILDREN [*all together*]. Father, dear!

[*The HUSSARS are utterly dumb-founded. A pantomimic scene follows. After every child has found its own father, every hussar heaps himself with children and starts off for a walk. Except for the FIRST HUSSAR, who chestily leads his little girl by the hand, each one carries a child on his left arm and leads one by the hand. Those who have more are clutched by juvenile hands wherever these hands can reach. Every child addresses its father quietly and simultaneously, and every father answers just as quietly. A soft murmur of prattling sweeps over the stage, but not a word is intelligible to the audience. In fact, it is no stroll at all, rather a stroll-like motion, a step or two, to and fro.*]

FIRST HUSSAR [*in front, stops and picks up his little girl*]. And what message did your mother send me?

LITTLE GIRL. Tell me a story, father, dear.

[*Everybody stops. Silence. One by one they put down their children. Every child clings close to its father.*]

SEVERAL CHILDREN. Tell us a story, father, dear. Go on.

[*The whole group now stands in the forefront at right. The children squat down on the*

floor at the feet of their fathers.]

FIRST HUSSAR. Uncle Sergeant here will tell you a story. He knows real good ones.

SERGEANT'S SON. But isn't my father a hussar?

SERGEANT. Sure I am, my son.

[Protracted silence and pause.]

CORPORAL *[to SERGEANT]*. Go on, tell 'em something or I'll start to bawl.

SERGEANT'S SON. Do, father, tell us how you licked the enemy.

SERGEANT. Well, you see, it was like this, my son . . . *[All the children look at him and draw slightly closer to him.]* . . . We started to go to the land of the Russians . . .

CORPORAL'S SON. And did you sit on white horses?

SERGEANT. Sure we did . . . on white horses. Then as we were marching . . . knee-deep in the mud . . . I mean on horseback . . . all of a sudden . . .

FIRST HUSSAR'S DAUGHTER. Father, dear, where's your flowery cap?

FIRST HUSSAR. Listen to Uncle Sergeant, dear.

SERGEANT. So, as I was saying, the mud was deep . . . then suddenly came a lot of cannon balls.

FIRST HUSSAR'S DAUGHTER. Father, dear, where's your flowery cap?

SERGEANT. Yes, indeed . . . I tell you . . . a lot of cannon balls came.

SERGEANT'S SON. But, father . . . when you left you were a hussar.

[Bursts into tears. Silence.]

SERGEANT. Good Lord in Heaven . . . please help . . . just this once . . . your . . . your poor dead hussar.

CORPORAL *[to his own children, sternly]*. I'm telling you . . . you

see . . . there are no more horses here . . . they're tired now and asleep.

CORPORAL'S SON. Father dear, is yours a black horse?

CORPORAL. Yes.

[A huge shaft of golden light from above now alights upon the group. Affright, the children cover their faces.]

FIRST HUSSAR. Jesus . . . what a big light I see. . . .

[The HUSSARS, too, cover their faces.]

SERGEANT. Maybe . . . maybe it's the good Lord . . . looking at us. . . .

[They huddle closer together, as also the children.]

FIRST HUSSAR. I feel such a . . . great . . . sweet warmth in my bosom . . . above my heart. . . .

[Places his hand over his heart.]

SERGEANT. My heart, too . . . it's becoming so warm . . . as if it were burning. . . .

[Mechanically and slowly he opens the middle button on his blouse, then the others. Under it is a glittering jacket of pure gold. The swelling chords of distant music are heard, but there are no definite melodies distinguishable. Now a plaintive trumpet call is heard. All the HUSSARS, following the example of the SERGEANT, slowly and mutely and in blissful bewilderment, unbutton their blouses, under which are glittering military jackets woven of gold and brocaded with diamonds. Drab shakos, which suddenly appear as if from nowhere, are passed from hand to hand. The

outer coverings of these, too, are removed, revealing flowers and egrets, and gold-speckled straps. The shakos themselves are of pure, glittering gold. Slowly the soldiers stick the flowery egrets into their places, then don the shakos. Ornate, flower-bedecked swords appear. The light grows stronger. Smiling blissfully, the eight dead HUSSARS are now attired in diamonds and gold. The children, their arms wound around their knees, gaze up at them in admiration. Softly and ecstatically they whisper among themselves.]

FIRST HUSSAR'S DAUGHTER. My . . . how beautiful he is . . . my father. . . .

SERGEANT'S SON. . . What a handsome hussar . . . is my father . . .

ALL [encouraged]. How lovely . . . oh, so lovely. . . .

[Now it is only this narrow group that is bathed in intense radiance. In the rear, far among the clouds, appear the silhouettes of three horses. Gradually, the light on the group wanes.]

FIRST HUSSAR [whispering, but trembling with joy]. Sergeant . . . sir . . . look over there. . . .

[All turn their eyes toward the place.]

SERGEANT. The horses . . . [Bursts into tears.] Why, that's Bettie . . . my pet horse!

FIRST HUSSAR. And Lightning, too!

[The dim outlines of other horses are visible.]

CORPORAL. And there is Form!

◆ THE WHITE CLOUD

[They start off toward the horses. The children go along.]

SECOND HUSSAR. And little Stand-ard!

THIRD HUSSAR. There is Wifey, too!

FOURTH HUSSAR. And Bird!

FIFTH HUSSAR. And Shifty!

SIXTH HUSSAR. And Grenadier!

[With the SERGEANT at the head, followed by two soldiers and twenty-seven children, they dash madly toward the horses. The HUSSARS tenderly call their horses' names and other terms of endearment, while the children giggle and shriek gleefully. Ahead of the group is always darkness, while the group itself is in a constant flood of light. The HUSSARS are seen primping their horses and mounting them, after which they pick up their respective children and place them all about themselves upon the horses. All of this is accompanied by a hubbub: the children laugh and clap their hands together. Strains of music grow in intensity. Bugles blare in the distance, subdued and long. After every horse is fully loaded with HUSSARS and children, a huge flower-bedecked banner unfurls itself over them. Trumpet calls grow in volume. The human din becomes louder and louder. Into this bellows the—]

SERGEANT [with mighty voice]. On-on-on-onward!

[This is followed immediately by a bugle call.]

ALL HUSSARS. On-on-on-onward!

ALL CHILDREN. On-on-on-onward!

[The banner flutters aloft, the bugle continues to blare, and the whole group rides off. The bugle sound grows dimmer. One clearly hears the children, receding in the distance, incessantly laughing with joy. A skipping shadow of light in the distance marks their galloping from cloud to cloud. Now the rear is in semi-darkness again, while up front there is just enough light to show the CADET, as he covers his face with one arm. Gradually there is silence in the rear, only the shadow of light may be seen, and, mingled with the chords, may be heard the muffled, very distant, monotonous sound of the bugle. Enter at right, the angel, bringing light.]

ANGEL. Who are you?

CADET [*gracefully standing at attention*]. Permit me to present Coloman Nagy, Jr. de Szentkirály.

ANGEL. What is happening here?

CADET. Orphaned children are galloping with their fathers . . . upon the clouds . . . from cloud to cloud . . . like lightning.

ANGEL. And are you not . . . also a hussar?

CADET. Yes, I am.

ANGEL. Well, then, why are you not with them?

CADET. I . . . I have no children.

ANGEL. No children?

CADET. None. I myself am a child. The melancholy child of two sad old people.

ANGEL. How did you get here?

CADET. Just like the others. . . .

ANGEL. Where do you come from?

CADET. I . . . I come from the ball . . . it was directly from the ball that we went out . . . and I had scarcely looked about . . . it was night . . . it began to rain . . . but I had seen nothing . . . it couldn't have been more than a minute . . . and then . . .

[Bows his head.]

ANGEL. Have you no wife?

CADET. I am betrothed. BURLINGAME

ANGEL. Betrothed? PUBLIC

CADET. Yes. LIB.

[Silence.]

ANGEL. How old are you?

CADET. Nineteen.

ANGEL [*sorrowfully*]. Nineteen?

CADET. Yes.

[Silence.]

ANGEL. And your parents?

CADET. They don't even know that I am betrothed . . . only the two of us agreed . . . just the two of us . . . my bride and I . . . when I left. . . . But even at that it could not have happened for a long, long time. . . . Perhaps never . . . and so. . . .

ANGEL [*softly*]. You have come too early.

CADET. I have not even kissed my betrothed. We merely clasped hands. Very firmly.

ANGEL. You shall find comfort.

CADET. . . . Why . . . I hardly . . . just because . . . because I have not even seen the world . . . and it happened all too suddenly. . . .

ANGEL [*softly*]. How innocent you are.

CADET. I had no chance to muddy my boots. . . . I don't know to this minute what happened . . . how it came about . . . how it could hap-

pen so quickly. . . . It seems as if I were still holding the hand of my betrothed . . .

[The sound of childish laughter from afar.]

ANGEL. You will recover so much easier.

CADET. . . . They're coming. . . . And I. . . . Really I hardly know whether it is proper. . . . But you must pardon me, dear lovely angel . . . I do so reluctantly . . . I am even ashamed of myself . . . a little . . . but I . . . don't want to see them again. . . . Please pardon me. . . . *[Snaps into attention, bowing.]* Don't think ill of me for running away from them. . . .

[On tiptoes he dashes away at right.]

ANGEL. Children! Children!

[Runs toward them and disappears. The group is seen returning, without the ANGEL. Soldiers and children, noisily and panting. The horses are no longer visible and the swords have vanished. In wiping their brows, the shakos, too, disappear. From their pockets the soldiers bring forth gold and silver, which they scatter among the children.]

CORPORAL. Here are all the silver and gold coins you like.

FIRST HUSSAR. Hussars have plenty.

SERGEANT. Here you are . . . gold . . . and silver. . . .

[They pour money into the boys' caps and the girls' aprons, and heap them full of flowers just brought from without.]

SECOND HUSSAR. Here are flowers for you.

THIRD HUSSAR. Lilies, roses and nutmegs.

FOURTH HUSSAR. And here's more gold money . . . another handful.

FIFTH HUSSAR. Violets and cloves!

SIXTH HUSSAR. Forget-me-nots! Silver and gold!

[The sun is sinking lower. Joyously and noisily the children gather up the money and flowers. Behind them now appears the ANGEL.]

ANGEL. Children! *[Tense silence!]* It is evening. *[Silence. Not a stir is heard.]* It is evening, dear children . . . you must go home! *[Listens to sounds from below.]* . . . Down there the church bell is ringing already. . . . I hear it! . . . Your dear mothers are waiting for you!

[Motions and beckons them. It is dusk. Silent leave-taking. Kisses. Not a sound is heard. The children form a line and the ANGEL gently directs them. One by one, very softly, they begin to sing and start to return whence they came. The HUSSARS stand mutely by, grouped precisely as they were while expecting the children. They gaze after the youngsters. They even move to follow them but the ANGEL, holding the smallest child by the hand and bringing up the rear, gently motions to them to remain. The onlooker sees the singing procession pass on behind the cloud of mist in the rear. The ANGEL comes last. She carries a white-flowered staff in her hand with which she lovingly keeps them in line. The children, with song on their lips, disappear. The

HUSSARS *are motionless while the song is heard from afar. It is growing ever darker. Stars appear upon the endless canopy of blue. One by one, the HUSSARS come forward at left and sit down side by side upon the ground. Then they bring forth their pipes. One or two remain standing. They are engaged in soft, drawling conversation, now and then also fussing with their pipes.*]

CORPORAL. It was . . . beautiful . . . while it lasted.

SERGEANT. And now that's over.

[*Tense pause.*]

FIRST HUSSAR. They'll have that to talk about.

CORPORAL. It's no more than right, too. Let the village know.

SERGEANT. Let the village believe it.

CORPORAL. That it was like this.

SERGEANT. That's the way my grandfather used to tell it.

FIRST HUSSAR. My father, too.

SERGEANT. Let the child tell it, too, when he grows up.

CORPORAL. That's right. A hussar must remain a hussar.

[*Long pause.*]

SERGEANT. Let the village believe it.

FIRST HUSSAR. It's better like that!

[*Long pause.*]

SERGEANT. Because . . . down there it was one way . . .

CORPORAL. It was as it was. But so different. Not at all fit for the children.

SERGEANT. I should say not. It used to be good enough as it was. But that, they wouldn't understand. Just let them have it as they saw it here.

FIRST HUSSAR. By the grace of God.

CORPORAL. Let them tell it as they saw it here. Let the hussar go on being a hussar.

FIRST HUSSAR. What's the good of them knowing how it was? Beautiful Hungary has been left to them.

SERGEANT. Those damned dogs couldn't snatch it away.

CORPORAL. We did not give her up, but saved her for them.

FIRST HUSSAR. The rest they needn't worry about.

CORPORAL. That's our business.

[*All of them smoke their pipes for a long while. Pause.*]

CURTAIN

SCENE FIVE

[*Same as Scene One. Everything is like it was at the moment when the curtain descended at the end of scene one. The soldiers are singing once more in the distance. Only above the hillocks is the sky turning slightly lighter; a gray wintry dawn in its first flush. The sentinel is stirring the fire. After a long pause, two flashes of*

lightning are seen in the distance and, following this in due time, the muffled roar of two cannon shots are heard. Another pause. The sentinel slowly and calmly lights his pipe over the flames of his fire. For a little while longer the distant singing is heard, then, very slowly—]

CURTAIN

C A R N I V A L

Translated by

MELVILLE BAKER

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The Charles Frohman Company
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CHARACTERS

OROSZY

CAMILLA, *his wife*

MATHIAS OEZ

LISKA, *his sister*

NIKOLAUS

RUDOLF

EDMUND

THE CAPTAIN

CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

SECRETARY OF POLICE

FIRST WOMAN

SECOND WOMAN

THIRD WOMAN

SECRET SERVICE MAN

LACKEYS

DOORMEN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

Coatroom attendants

Budapest, during the close of the past century

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *A corridor off the grand ballroom in Budapest. A high-walled corridor with entrances at the right and left. An arch, right center, center, and one left center. The set is*

backed by a high wall with several windows through which the street lights are shining. The corridor is devoid of furnishings except for an oblong settee at the center.

AT RISE: *When the curtain rises NIKOLAUS and EDMUND stand, looking from the opening right, into the ballroom. Music is heard from a distance; they are playing the Hungarian National Anthem. There is a short pause.*]

EDMUND. The Princess is coming.
 . . . See her? Ah, there's majesty for you. [NIKOLAUS *does not answer.*] The proud look she has!

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

[*Pause.*]

EDMUND. Magnificent, all that.
 . . . Those burning lights carried before her. . . . [NIKOLAUS *remains silent. Still looking into the ballroom.*] And that splendid retinue.

NIKOLAUS. Yes, see them push and squirm.

EDMUND. They're closing in around the platform. The floor is quite empty now. There's a woman hurrying across the floor alone—she's coming this way. [*Pause.*] If I'm not mistaken it's Mme. Oroszy.

NIKOLAUS. Yes, that's who it is.

EDMUND. Then I'm going.
 [*Starts to leave.*] Coming?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

EDMUND [*takes NIKOLAUS' arm*].
 I don't like her.

NIKOLAUS. Why not?

EDMUND. She is beautiful—but stupid.

NIKOLAUS [*dreamily*]. Beautiful. . . .

EDMUND. Forgive me. I am the stupid one. I'm always forgetting that you—

NIKOLAUS. Don't bother about me, Edmund.

[*Looking out.*]

EDMUND. I am going. [*Crosses right.*] And please understand, it's

not that I have no respect for her intelligence—say rather, that I have too much respect for the dangerous quality of her beauty.

NIKOLAUS. She is beautiful. . . .

EDMUND. Oh, come along. I can't bear to see you torture yourself with your hopeless infatuation. It's frightful—for two years now. . . .

[*Takes his arm.*]

NIKOLAUS. Yes, you'd better take me with you. If I stayed here alone, I'd only wait for her.

[*They exit right. Pause. Music is heard off left. Pause. The stage is empty. Lady and gentleman cross stage right to left. CAMILLA hurries in from the ballroom. She sits on the divan and begins to fan herself. She is warm from dancing. There is a smile on her face. Pause.*]

RUDOLF [*hurries in from the ballroom out of breath*]. You did hurry away; I could scarcely keep up with you.

CAMILLA. I didn't ask you to run after me.

RUDOLF. Must one wait to be asked?

CAMILLA. I wanted to rest.

RUDOLF. Do you wish to be alone?

CAMILLA. A useless wish.

RUDOLF. I beg your pardon. If you ask me to, I will respectfully withdraw.

[*Turns away to left.*]

CAMILLA. I won't ask you. If you go some one else will come. There are never less than ten of you on my track.

RUDOLF. Shall I stand guard then?

CAMILLA. It's quiet here. I can't

bear all that confusion out there. Every one struggling to get a look at that Princess from Vienna—hundreds of them crowding around the platform, tearing the clothes off each other's backs.

RUDOLF. The ladies of the nobility are being presented to Her Highness.

CAMILLA. And the rest stand and gape at her. Disgusting! I'll wait here until they're through! I came to dance, not to make curtsies. And we *were* dancing then—I was in a dream—a dream of flying. Of course you would have to stop me.

RUDOLF. What could I do? The procession began.

CAMILLA. I was flying—and you stopped me.

RUDOLF. Were you pleased with your partner?

CAMILLA [*not hearing him*]. I could dance forever.

RUDOLF. As your partner, may I not beg for a word of recognition?

CAMILLA. Was I dancing with you? I had quite forgotten.

[*The CAPTAIN enters from the left.*]

CAPTAIN. You've withdrawn from the field of action?

CAMILLA. It did me no good, as you see.

CAPTAIN. Shall we go?

RUDOLF. Mrs. Oroszy wants me to keep away the crowd.

CAPTAIN. I have been searching high and low for you.

CAMILLA. Like every one else. Why can't I be left alone?

CAPTAIN. Because you are beautiful. As beautiful as a Madonna.

CAMILLA. Thank you. I know it.

CAPTAIN. For me you are a magnet. You have some mysterious power which draws me to you.

RUDOLF. Mrs. Oroszy is annoyed because her dance was interrupted.

CAPTAIN. I don't blame her. She dances divinely. I saw her.

RUDOLF. But her partner was not bad.

CAPTAIN. Marvelous! Wonderful! You danced like—the bear in the zoo.

[*Crosses to divan.*]

CAMILLA. Will the ceremonies last much longer?

CAPTAIN. The ladies are just being presented. And what a sight it is! A long time since Budapest has seen such elegance and splendor.

RUDOLF. And such jewels!

[*Looking left.*]

CAMILLA. I don't want to see them.

RUDOLF [*turns to CAMILLA*]. Do you hate wealth and pomp so much?

CAMILLA. Hate them?—No. But to see them—and long for them—dream of them—No, I'd rather not have them near me.

CAPTAIN. And the splendid retinue that came with Her Highness. [RUDOLF goes to entrance left and looks off.] Don't strain yourself trying to see her. She is hidden by a crowd of officials and nobles. A stupid, gaping mob. Every one trying to get as near her as they can—pushing and jostling.

CAMILLA. And that's what you want me to go and look at?

CAPTAIN. You're quite right to keep away.

CAMILLA. I don't like such things. I came to a ball and they won't let me dance.

CAPTAIN. Have you no desire to be presented to Her Highness?

CAMILLA. No.

CAPTAIN. Court life doesn't appeal to you then?

CAMILLA. When it's over in a minute? No, not at all. If it could last— But that is impossible for me, and what is impossible I don't want.

CAPTAIN. A philosophy of negation.

CAMILLA. What?

CAPTAIN. Well, philosophy, it—

CAMILLA. I don't like that either. I don't understand it. I—it's simply that I never want anything I can't have. I'm sorry for those people standing in there with open mouths. I know what it is to despise a man whom I don't attract.

CAPTAIN. Such a man deserves to be despised.

RUDOLF [*turns, advances a couple of steps*]. In that case you must adore me.

CAMILLA [*to RUDOLF*]. I have heard that you are very clever. But whenever you open your mouth, you only bore me.

[NIKOLAUS and OEZ enter right center entrance.]

OEZ. I told you they would be here.

NIKOLAUS. An opposition ball?

CAMILLA. So you, too, have found me?

NIKOLAUS. I have not been looking for you.

CAMILLA. At last. Some one who has not been looking for me!

NIKOLAUS. We were looking for Liska. But we've had to give it up. She's in the very center of the whirlpool.

OEZ. A clever woman like my sister Liska there's no saying "No" to. When the Princess arrived Liska was at the back of the crowd; a

minute later she was in the middle, and now she's in the front—in the very first row.

CAMILLA. And stares with open mouth like the rest of them. And you allow that?

OEZ. She's independent—she's a widow. Anyway, I couldn't have stopped her. There's nothing she wouldn't do to see a live Princess—as it was, she knocked down a General.

CAPTAIN. Mrs. Oroszy does not care for that sort of thing.

RUDOLF. She's right.

NIKOLAUS [*leaning over divan—softly*]. Have you been annoyed?

CAMILLA [*without answering NIKOLAUS*]. Where is my husband?

OEZ. Talking politics.

NIKOLAUS. Have you been annoyed?

CAMILLA. Very much. They have interrupted my pleasure.

[NIKOLAUS *steps back*.]

OEZ [*crosses and sits right of CAMILLA*]. CAPTAIN *sits on left end of divan*. It won't be for long. The Princess will leave soon. She never stays more than a few minutes.

CAMILLA. That is much too long.

OEZ. You're spoiled.

CAMILLA. Why do they all come? To show themselves off? To be envied? To make ordinary people feel uncomfortable?

RUDOLF [*sits left of CAMILLA*]. That's it, exactly.

[*The four men sit down, silently, one after the other.*]

CAMILLA. At least you always admit I'm right. [*She jumps up and leaves men.*] Oh, say something. Amuse me!

RUDOLF [*rises*]. I know a story—

CAMILLA. For heaven's sakes! Not you!

CAPTAIN. How much longer do you stay in Budapest?

[*Takes a step toward CAMILLA.*]

CAMILLA. We leave to-morrow.

EDMUND [*enters from right*]. Ah—this is better. . . .

CAMILLA. Ah, I've been waiting for you.

EDMUND. Thank you.

CAMILLA. Yes. Whenever I try to be alone, there's not one of you fails to find me.

OEZ. You've been here for three months?

CAMILLA. Nearly four. But now they're beginning the spring plowing on the estate.

CAPTAIN. Do you—do you always come to Budapest in the winter?

CAMILLA. You ought to know that we're here during the season—for the Carnival.

CAPTAIN. I beg your pardon.

EDMUND. Which do you like better: Budapest or home?

CAPTAIN. I congratulate you on your brilliant question.

OEZ. Mrs. Oroszy prefers the country.

CAMILLA. Sometimes I do—and sometimes not.

CAPTAIN. I understand you are an excellent horsewoman. Have you been to the riding academy here?

CAMILLA [*to NIKOLAUS*]. Nikolaus, aren't you going to ask me something?

CAPTAIN. Do our questions tire you?

CAMILLA. No, oh, no. Can't you see how entertained I am?

EDMUND [*to RUDOLF*]. Did you go to the Casino to-night?

RUDOLF. Yes.

EDMUND. Did you win?

RUDOLF. I lost.

EDMUND. How much?

RUDOLF. Four thousand.

CAMILLA. You lost four thousand?

RUDOLF. Four to-day, six yesterday.

EDMUND. I lost twelve thousand in three days.

CAPTAIN. If you'd like to ride, I have a little Irish mare—I'd be more than happy if you'd care to try her.

OEZ. Mrs. Oroszy has enough riding at home. A little *too* much. At least a little too much for her husband's taste.

CAPTAIN. Is your husband strict?

CAMILLA. Yes, he is strict.

OEZ. A man of character. The right breed. Inflexible and strong. And he needs to be. His charming wife likes to ride the wildest horses—horses which cavalry instructors won't take out.

CAPTAIN. That's what I like to hear.

CAMILLA. I live a healthy outdoor life at home—I sleep well, too. I'm in bed by half past ten every night. I like to sleep.

OEZ. Can't you sleep here?

CAMILLA. Not soundly.

CAPTAIN. When you're in the city you should go out more. Do you care for driving?

CAMILLA. When I'm at home—yes.

RUDOLF. I know what you like—four-in-hand.

CAMILLA. Oh, yes. I've got a fine new American brace now and four grays that go like the wind. With them—

[EDMUND *takes out his handkerchief and holds it up to Ru-*

DOLF's nose. RUDOLF lets EDMUND smell his. They sit on divan.]

NIKOLAUS. With them you drive through a stream in full flood.

CAMILLA. Who told you that?

NIKOLAUS. Your husband complained to me about it. I hope he let the punishment fit the crime.

CAMILLA. He didn't speak to me for a week. But there was no need for that. The stream was very narrow.

NIKOLAUS. But swift from the floods.

OEZ. A treacherous stream—I know it. But then you're always up to something. Last year it was the railroad.

CAMILLA. Oh, don't speak of that.

CAPTAIN [*curious*]. What about the railroad?

OEZ. At one corner of their estate the track goes through a narrow cut. If you're standing on the edge with a train going by, you can only see the tops of the cars beneath you. Well, one day last year Mrs. Oroszy was riding by there when the Vienna Express was passing through. And having nothing better to do, she proceeded to jump over the moving train. . . .

CAPTAIN. Bravo!

CAMILLA. Yes, but—

OEZ. I know what you're going to say—the same excuse you gave before. That it wasn't dangerous because the train was going slowly.

CAPTAIN. And was your husband very annoyed at that?

CAMILLA. I thought I'd never hear the last of it. He'd like to have cut my hair off and locked me up in a tower. He was in a frightful state over it.

CAPTAIN. Is the Baroness still there?

CAMILLA. Of course.

EDMUND. Who is the Baroness?

CAMILLA. But I'm not riding her now.

EDMUND. Oh.

CAMILLA. My husband forbade me to.

OEZ.. A vicious mare.

CAMILLA. I'm breaking in Piros now. A splendid chestnut with a star on his forehead. Do you know him?

CAPTAIN. I've not had the pleasure—and I know the Baroness only by reputation—she has quite a reputation in the Cavalry.

CAMILLA. What a pity there are no races in Budapest now.

CAPTAIN. They're holding them in Nice now.

RUDOLF [*with his handkerchief still in his hand*]. Very well. Mrs. Oroszy shall decide. [*Rises, crosses to CAMILLA.*] Edmund says that I am too highly perfumed.

CAMILLA. Yes, I noticed it when we were dancing.

RUDOLF. Was it too strong?

CAMILLA. I dislike perfume on men.

RUDOLF [*holding out his handkerchief*]. Oh, but this isn't perfume. Merely Lubin's Vinaigre de Toilette with a few drops of Russian Eau de Cologne.

EDMUND. A chemist.

CAMILLA [*sits center*]. Do you mix them yourself?

NIKOLAUS [*taking out his handkerchief*]. I use plain Eau de Cologne.

RUDOLF [*smelling it*]. German.

NIKOLAUS. Lucky you don't have

to depend on your nose. That came from Paris.

CAPTAIN [*smelling his own handkerchief*]. You can scarcely notice mine—only a few drops of Maria Farina.

EDMUND [*with his handkerchief*]. That's all right. That's quite in form. Just what I use. [*Smells his handkerchief.*] Just enough to accentuate the odor of fresh linen. [*Smells RUDOLF's handkerchief.*] Yours shouts out loud! [*Smells NIKOLAUS's handkerchief.*] But yours is quite correct.

RUDOLF [*smelling CAPTAIN's handkerchief*]. I don't smell anything.

CAPTAIN. That's what comes of abusing your nose. [*Sniffs RUDOLF's handkerchief.*] Horrible! [*To CAMILLA, who is holding her handkerchief.*] Might I have your handkerchief?

CAMILLA. No.

RUDOLF. There's nothing on it. I smelled it while we were dancing.

[*RUDOLF sits right of CAMILLA.*]

EDMUND. Were you at the opera last night?

CAMILLA. No. Tell me, how much was it you lost?

EDMUND. Twelve thousand. Don't you like Meyerbeer?

CAMILLA. I don't know him. What were they playing?

EDMUND. "The Huguenots."

CAMILLA. No, not at the opera—I mean at the Casino.

EDMUND. Faro.

CAMILLA. Stupid game.

EDMUND. Do you like Donizetti's "Lucia"?

CAMILLA. Good gypsy music, I like.

RUDOLF [*sitting right of CAMILLA.*
EDMUND *crosses to right of RUDOLF.*]

But grand opera—the sweet enchantment of its music—

OEZ. What do you think of—

CAMILLA. That's all right for your sugar dolls.

OEZ. What do you think of—

RUDOLF. I thought you had a passion for it. Last week I saw you at the concert and when the soloist played the love aria, you sat there enthralled—drugged with beauty. Your eyes were closed and then you put your hand over your face.

CAMILLA. Thank heaven no one noticed.

RUDOLF. What?

CAMILLA. That I was asleep. [*To OEZ.*] You were going to say something?

OEZ. I was going to ask how you liked Verdi's "Rigoletto," but now, thank you, I won't risk it.

CAMILLA. I was asleep and so afraid some one would notice it. That's why I don't go out much in Budapest. They always expect you to talk. Why, at home, sometimes I don't say a thing all day long. But here—here there are always men whispering in your ear—or you have to talk about famous authors. All that's no use to me. It's all very well for your fine ladies who use their wit to make fools of their husbands. . . . Oh, I know their kind. That's why we stay at a small hotel.

RUDOLF. Why?

CAMILLA. To be alone.

OEZ. Why don't you take a house next year?

CAMILLA. My husband would like to. But I want neither house nor company. That will mean I'll have to listen to more talk about the crazy scribblers or the theatre.

[*The men have surrounded CAMILLA.*]

CAPTAIN. Don't you care for the theatre?

CAMILLA. Not half so much as the circus. I adore that—the acrobats and the trick riders. . . .

CAPTAIN. Bravo!

CAMILLA. And the beautiful Equestrienne.

EDMUND. So you don't like plays?

CAMILLA. No. [*Turns to CAPTAIN.*] We go to the circus often—particularly when Madame Carre is in Budapest. Or the trained lions at the Kreuzberg. I'd travel miles to see them.

CAPTAIN. Only last week they had some trained dogs that danced the waltz.

CAMILLA. Are they still there?

CAPTAIN. No, they've gone to Warsaw.

[*OROSZY enters right center entrance. There is a sudden silence.*]

OROSZY. Plenty of men, not so many women.

[*He stands observing the company.*]

CAMILLA [*rises and goes to her husband to whom she speaks in an obedient tone*]. Did you come for me, dearest?

OROSZY [*kisses her hands*]. No, my dear. I only wanted to know where you were.

CAMILLA. I was waiting until they are through in there.

OROSZY. Aren't you interested in seeing those noble ladies bow themselves to the ground?

CAMILLA. Not in the slightest.

OROSZY. Plenty of women there.

CAMILLA. Women? With water in their veins. It's enough to disgust

a right-minded person. Hundreds of them scraping their knees to an Austrian Princess.

OROSZY. Hear, hear. My little angel can teach you all self-respect. You're right, my dear. Proud and unbending—that's my wife.

CAMILLA. We are gentry, too.

OROSZY. And not since yesterday, either.

CAMILLA. We do not kneel.

OROSZY. No. That we don't. I'm going to order the supper. Edmund, come and help me find two nice rooms.

[*EDMUND crosses to right.*]

CAMILLA. Are you going to play cards in the second?

OROSZY. A little.

RUDOLF. We take our revenge to-night.

OROSZY. How many will there be for supper?

CAMILLA. There are four, five, seven here—and Liska makes eight.

OROSZY. Liska eight, Kapolnay and Jurkovich ten, Kovacz eleven. Eleven in all. Is there anything particular you would like?

CAMILLA. No—as long as I can dance, I don't care what I eat.

OROSZY. And Matyas, you'd better look after your sister.

OEZ. She doesn't care to have me trailing after her. And besides, I haven't the slightest idea where she is.

OROSZY. She's upstairs—in complete despair.

OEZ. Despair—why?

OROSZY. Because she's being sewed up.

OEZ. Sewed up?

OROSZY. In the crush one of her flounces was torn off. But she didn't miss anything.

OEZ. Serves her right—serves her quite right.

OROSZY. Are you staying here?

CAMILLA. If you have no objection.

OROSZY. Not at all, if you're enjoying yourself.

RUDOLF. And you have nothing to fear—there are too many of us.

OROSZY [*very seriously*]. My dear fellow, I have never had anything to fear.

RUDOLF. I merely meant—most husbands like to have their wives attended by several men. Safety in numbers.

OROSZY. Safety?

RUDOLF [*embarrassed*]. Where there is more than one man, each one watches the other.

OROSZY. That is not necessary.

RUDOLF. I only meant that . . .

OROSZY. The remark was equally unnecessary.

CAMILLA. But he was only joking. You take everything so seriously.

OROSZY. Did I offend you?

RUDOLF. No, no, not at all.

OROSZY. Well—[*Crosses to EDMUND.*—then. Come, Edmund, you can talk German to the head waiter better than I. [*They start to leave.*] Supper will be served at midnight, promptly.

[*Exits with EDMUND, right.*]

CAPTAIN. Your little joke was not so successful.

RUDOLF. He didn't understand. I simply meant . . .

CAPTAIN. Yes, we know. [*Crosses center. RUDOLF crosses to left.*] I agree with you entirely about these stupid ceremonies, but as all the other officers are inside, I'm obliged to put in an appearance. There is to be

another quadrille before supper. May I have the honor?

RUDOLF. Mme. Oroszy does not care to be made conspicuous. Quite naturally.

CAMILLA. I want to amuse myself, not others. We never go to more than four or five balls during Carnival. That's all my husband permits. So that has to do me for a whole year of dancing. [*Pause.*] How wonderful the Budapest balls have become. All fire and passion.

CAPTAIN. Plenty of that. Only yesterday there was an affair over a czardas.

CAMILLA. A duel?

CAPTAIN. Pistols.

RUDOLF. Hole in the air?

CAPTAIN. Two.

CAMILLA. A love affair?

CAPTAIN. With all the trimmings. Engaged couple—and a rowdy.

CAMILLA. Who?

CAPTAIN. Richard.

CAMILLA. He dances well.

RUDOLF. A bully and an adventurer.

CAMILLA. He dances well.

RUDOLF. An idler—nothing but debts. A common swindler.

CAMILLA. He dances well.

RUDOLF [*giving up*]. Very well. A demigod then.

[*Goes to the opening.*]

CAPTAIN. Excuse me—while I visit the officers for a moment—[*Kisses her hand.*—then I'll return. [*Crosses to left. Bows. Speaks to RUDOLF as he goes out.*] Why do you argue with that divine woman?

RUDOLF. She drives me wild, she's so stupid.

CAPTAIN. Don't you understand? That's just why she is so charming. . . .

RUDOLF. No.

CAPTAIN. Do you intend to wait till you're thrown out?

RUDOLF. Yes, I do.

[CAPTAIN *exits left*.]

CAMILLA [*crosses left*]. Nikolaus is very quiet to-night.

RUDOLF. Nowadays he's always quiet.

CAMILLA [*to* NIKOLAUS]. Are things very bad?

NIKOLAUS [*crosses to* CAMILLA]. As bad as ever. But that's not why I'm silent. I'm not really silent—the others talk too much.

CAMILLA. Have you been gambling?

NIKOLAUS. Of course.

CAMILLA. All night long?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA [*sits center*]. Did you lose?

NIKOLAUS. As usual.

CAMILLA. You didn't get up till afternoon.

NIKOLAUS. Till this evening.

CAMILLA. You came straight from your bed to the ball?

NIKOLAUS. No, after I got up I wrote a poem—a wretched, dismal poem . . . I tore it up . . . Then I played Beethoven for three hours.

CAMILLA. You're in an ugly humor.

NIKOLAUS. As ugly as death.

[*Pause*.]

RUDOLF [*for something to say*]. I read a story in the paper about the day the Empress Eugenie cried during a performance in the theatre and the entire audience . . .

[NIKOLAUS *crosses up right*.]

CAMILLA. Oh, never mind that.

RUDOLF. Never mind what?

CAMILLA. Your story. I'm not interested.

RUDOLF. I beg your pardon. [*Pause*.] I know another story—about a card game. . . .

NIKOLAUS. Don't be a bore.

RUDOLF [*indicating* NIKOLAUS]. Isn't he imposing on you?

CAMILLA. No.

RUDOLF. What do you want me to do now?

NIKOLAUS. Look into the ball-room and see if the Princess has come.

RUDOLF. She came a long time ago.

NIKOLAUS. Then see if she's gone.

RUDOLF [*to* CAMILLA]. Shall I?

CAMILLA. It doesn't matter to me whether you're here or not.

RUDOLF. Oh. In that case, I'm not.

[*Exits left. A short pause.*

NIKOLAUS, *who is sitting on the same sofa as CAMILLA, although at the other end, moves up to her. The following scene is spoken very low and quickly.*]

NIKOLAUS. To-morrow you're leaving. I suffer and you go away.

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. Only one day more.

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. And will you never—

CAMILLA. Never.

NIKOLAUS. Last year I endured the agony of those four months. And now this year again—and you have not had mercy.

CAMILLA. Stop acting.

NIKOLAUS. What a frightful life.

CAMILLA. You worry your mother.

NIKOLAUS. A dog's life.

CAMILLA. You don't work.

NIKOLAUS. You know why.

CAMILLA. You failed your bar examinations.

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. And I am to blame for that?

NIKOLAUS. No, not you. Only the madness in me that makes me hope for the impossible.

CAMILLA. You're ruining yourself.

NIKOLAUS. That is my intention. Do you believe that?

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. And now only one more day—then I wait and wait for the next winter.

CAMILLA. Who knows whether we will be alive then?

NIKOLAUS. I won't bear it!

CAMILLA. You must.

NIKOLAUS. How easily you say that.

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. Not for a minute—not for a second even, do you think of my suffering—or try to understand.

CAMILLA. I think of it.

NIKOLAUS [*staring at her*]. It's maddening—your calm mysterious beauty. . . . [*Pause.*] Did you ever read "The Romance of a Poor Young Man"?

CAMILLA. No. Who wrote it?

NIKOLAUS. A French novelist, who is the Empress' lover. His name is—

CAMILLA. Never mind—I'll only forget. Write it out for me and I'll get the book.

NIKOLAUS. I sent it to you last year.

CAMILLA. Oh, was that the one?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. I meant to read it—but I lost it.

NIKOLAUS. Lost it?

CAMILLA. I get so many books. No sooner does a man begin to make love to me than he sends me a book to tell me the rest. Whenever we

leave, the hotel chambermaid gets a trunkful of books.

NIKOLAUS. I am eating ~~my~~ heart out—and you are calm and happy.

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. No emotions, no desires—no thought of anything but the present. Oh, if you were mine, if you were mine. . . .

[*Moves to her.*]

CAMILLA [*rises, escaping from him*]. If I were yours?

NIKOLAUS. Life—splendid, glorious life—would begin . . . If I could open your eyes, make them see—show them the world before them—teach them to feel—and suffer. . . .

CAMILLA. No, I wouldn't want that.

NIKOLAUS. Your eyes would open—open wide with joy and wonder and passion. . . .

CAMILLA. I know . . . They are closed. I have often felt it. I see with them but they are asleep.

NIKOLAUS. Do your eyes never dream?

CAMILLA. They would like to. [*Movement from NIKOLAUS.*] But please go . . . we can't stay here alone.

[*Crosses right center.*]

NIKOLAUS. Don't send me away. Are you afraid?

CAMILLA [*sits center*]. What should I be afraid of?

NIKOLAUS. I'm bleeding to death by your side. There is an ocean of coldness between us. Not once have you looked at me with warmth in your eyes—or with any kind of feeling. [*Sits left of CAMILLA.*] I don't think you could . . . perhaps because you have never had a child.

CAMILLA. Perhaps.

NIKOLAUS. Your glorious body—

and always so calm—you're like a beautiful wild animal.

CAMILLA. An enemy of my husband once said: Camilla Oroszy is a beast of prey in repose.

NIKOLAUS. Oroszy. . . . Do you love him?

CAMILLA. He is strong.

NIKOLAUS [*impatiently*]. Do you love him?

CAMILLA. He is very strict.

NIKOLAUS. You don't love him.

CAMILLA [*with suppressed hate*]. He is kind and firm.

NIKOLAUS. There is some one else—[CAMILLA *turns to* NIKOLAUS.]—or there has been.

CAMILLA. Never in my life. You are the first man I have ever spoken to like this. [*Movement from* NIKOLAUS.] But go now—we can't stay here any longer.

NIKOLAUS. I am the first?

CAMILLA. The first.

NIKOLAUS. I love you and you allow it?

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. Why?

CAMILLA. I like you. You and your sadness. You are a real person—the only man among all these puppets.

NIKOLAUS. What is to become of me?

CAMILLA. Liska is dying for love of you. And *her* eyes are open—she is a woman of the world. She reads books—she even plays the harp.

NIKOLAUS. If this were only jealousy!

CAMILLA. No, I'm only sorry for Liska.

NIKOLAUS. Because she loves me?

CAMILLA. Yes—but it's more than

love—I've never seen anything like it. She's sick for you.

NIKOLAUS. I don't want her.

CAMILLA. I know it.

NIKOLAUS. I want you—only you . . . if it costs me my life. [CAMILLA *rises*. NIKOLAUS *rises*.] I hunger and thirst for you—to arouse you—to arise with you into a greater, more splendid life. . . . Now I am only a tired idler. But I am young, talented, daring—I could achieve anything if there were some one to care, to be proud of me—some one to go with me up to the heights. . . .

CAMILLA. That would be splendid.

NIKOLAUS. Am I worthy of that?

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. Then why can't it be?

CAMILLA. Why should it? There is nothing to impel me.

NIKOLAUS. And if there were?

CAMILLA. Then I would leave my husband.

NIKOLAUS. But as it is—

CAMILLA. I like to be with you. That is all.

[*She slowly walks away from him. Crosses to left.*]

NIKOLAUS. And to talk to me.

CAMILLA. To listen to you. It amuses me.

[*Crosses to corner.*]

NIKOLAUS. Amuses you?

CAMILLA [*comes back*]. Very much.

NIKOLAUS [*crosses to her, very close*]. I won't have you go away again. Long empty days and nothing to hope for—not even the chance of meeting you on the street. . . . I would—I would like to visit you in the spring.

CAMILLA [*crosses to center*]. That is impossible.

NIKOLAUS. There will be some one else there.

CAMILLA. No one.

NIKOLAUS. Is that the truth?

CAMILLA [*sits at left end of settee*]. It is the truth. I don't want any one—nor anything.

NIKOLAUS [*bending over her*]. Not even my words, my hot impotent words?

CAMILLA. Oh, yes, they are well enough.

NIKOLAUS. I almost believe they could burn their way to your heart.

CAMILLA. There are times. . . .

NIKOLAUS. Now?

CAMILLA. Now I am playing with you.

NIKOLAUS. Now?

CAMILLA. They make me feel—Perhaps your words are welcome to me now. I have been dancing. I am at the ball; it is night. I so love to dance. Perhaps—at this hour—it's so warm—and the music—[*She listens for a moment.*] Those are good gypsies to-night.

NIKOLAUS [*to himself*]. I'll kill myself.

CAMILLA. Who is the leader? Sarkosky?

NIKOLAUS. I'll kill myself.

CAMILLA. But there's a still better orchestra. It's in Budapest now—I forget what it's called. Nikolaus, be careful—not so close to me. [*Looking right.*] Here comes Liska.

NIKOLAUS [*drawing away a little to left*]. Liska. . . .

[*Liska enters from the right center entrance. She stands still. There is a short pause.*]

CAMILLA. Come in, come in.

LISKA. Is my brother here?

CAMILLA. Where have you come from, Liska?

LISKA. From the coatroom.

CAMILLA. Did they tear your dress?

LISKA. Yes, they ripped off a flounce. But the woman in the coatroom sewed it on again.

CAMILLA. It served you right.

LISKA. Well, perhaps.

[*Pause.*]

CAMILLA. You look at me so angrily.

* LISKA. Why no, I. . . .

CAMILLA. You hate me. You always hate me at balls.

LISKA. I simply marvel at you and envy you.

CAMILLA. Were you finally presented to Her Highness?

LISKA. With my dress torn? It's too bad. My brother would have liked me to.

CAMILLA. Your brother! Just now he was making fun of you because you let yourself be pushed around in that crowd.

LISKA. It was he who sent me.

CAMILLA. What a joke that is.

LISKA. I didn't want to go in. He made me. He said I had only to show myself—I would be presented. I was a young widow and it would help my social position. [*Sits right of CAMILLA.*] Brothers are more troublesome than husbands—particularly when it's a question of social standing. Personally, that doesn't interest me at all. And I had no intention of going there—I wanted to come here. [*Pause.*] Where are the others?

CAMILLA. My husband is ordering the supper.

[*Pause.*]

LISKA. Supper?

CAMILLA. Yes.

[*Pause.*]

LISKA [*nervously*]. We make—a small party ourselves here. . . .

CAMILLA. You think so?

LISKA. I only meant—

CAMILLA. It might be smaller.

NIKOLAUS [*rises*]. If I. . . .

CAMILLA. No, not you.

LISKA. I know. I am the one. [*As she goes out.*] Where is my brother?

CAMILLA. I don't allow any one to take that tone with me.

LISKA. Oh, very well.

[*Hurries off left. Pause.*]

CAMILLA. Go after her.

NIKOLAUS. No.

CAMILLA. Immediately. Go after her. I don't want to see her torturing herself on your account. When she's in that state, she uses her claws—and generally on me.

NIKOLAUS. The poor thing.

[*Crosses to left. Goes after her.*]

CAMILLA [*watches him go out. Then throws her head back and begins to fan herself. Suddenly she notices something on the floor by the entrance to the ballroom. She slides along the sofa, bends over and picks the object up. Then she comes back to the center of the sofa and looks with astonishment and terror at the object in her hand.*] A diamond!

[*She looks around to see if she is observed and then stares again at the stone.*]

OEZ [*entering from the left, looking back into the ballroom*]. A frightful thing has happened!

CAMILLA. What?

OEZ. An unheard-of scandal! The Princess has lost the crown diamond from her coronet.

CAMILLA [*slowly*]. The crown diamond?

OEZ. Yes. They say it's worth millions. And it's nowhere to be found. The excitement is terrific.

CAMILLA. The crown diamond?

OEZ. Yes, one of the crown jewels. A colossal stone— It has a name— It's spoken of in all the schoolbooks.

CAMILLA. And the Princess has lost it?

OEZ. From the center of her coronet.

CAMILLA. It fell out?

OEZ. Evidently.

CAMILLA. And she didn't notice it?

OEZ. Not until now. She held her head so straight the stone must have fallen backwards from the top of the coronet onto her dress and then to the floor. It could hardly have been stolen from her head.

CAMILLA [*smiling*]. Hardly.

OEZ [*looks off*]. They're beside themselves in there.

[*The music begins again.*]

CAMILLA. And she doesn't know where she lost it?

OEZ. Probably in the ballroom. But some dancer may have easily kicked it aside—without knowing it. They are looking now in front of the balcony where the Patronesses are sitting.

RUDOLF [*hurries in from right and crosses to CAMILLA*]. Have you heard— The Princess. . . .

CAMILLA. Has lost the crown diamond from her coronet. [*Crosses right.*] I know.

[*Puts the hand which holds the diamond slowly behind her back.*]

RUDOLF. You've told her already?

OEZ. Yes.

RUDOLF. Too late again. It's pandemonium in there.

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OEZ. I can well believe it.

RUDOLF [*comes back to right center*]. First every one began running around in circles— It was almost a panic. Then every one was asked to go on as if nothing had happened. The Governor went from group to group begging the ladies to go on dancing.

CAMILLA. Did they?

RUDOLPH. They had to. Lucky the Governor didn't have to ask you.

RUDOLF. Ask me? I couldn't dance if I were told to. I came away. I'll not dance on a police order. The orchestra has been instructed to go on playing as loud as it can and not to stop.

[*They listen to the music off stage.*]

CAMILLA. Do they all know about it?

RUDOLF. The whole ballroom knew it in a second. The Mayor went up to the Princess. The poor Police Commissioner is as white as a sheet.

CAMILLA. Are they looking for the stone?

RUDOLF. Even the Mayor. Every one who's not dancing is searching.

OEZ [*with conviction*]. They ought to search the entire building. Begin where the Princess came in and follow her course step by step to the throne.

CAMILLA [*with a barely perceptible trembling in her voice*]. Suppose she left it in her carriage?

RUDOLF. They've looked—it's not there.

[*Oroszy enters from left.*]

OROSZY. Well. . . .

RUDOLF. We've told her everything.

OEZ. Horrible!

OROSZY [*to Oez*]. You put up as much of a howl in there as if you had lost the diamond yourself.

OEZ. They say it's worth millions.

CAMILLA. Millions?

OROSZY. Is that all? You know?

OEZ. Impossible to value it—There's the value of the stone itself—then its historical worth. . . .

OROSZY [*crosses to Camilla*]. But you haven't heard the worst—what's just happened. All the men went up to the platform and formed a circle round the ladies. Then the Governor begged their pardons and herded them all into the music room. There they are being searched.

RUDOLF. Frightful!

OEZ. Where is my sister?

OROSZY. As I was passing along the balcony I saw her in the crowd in front of the platform.

OEZ. Good God!

[*Runs off left.*]

CAMILLA. They're searching the women?

OROSZY. Every one of them.

CAMILLA. Why do they submit to it?

OROSZY. My dear child, this is something that happens once in a thousand years. Even Mrs. Baroczy had to go into the music room. And the wife of the director of the Bank of Austria. No one thinks *they* stole the diamond.

CAMILLA. And they're searching them, too?

OROSZY. Certainly.

RUDOLF. Of course they didn't steal it. [*Steps to the left.*] But I'd like to see them being searched.

OROSZY [*sits center*]. No one stole it—At the worst some one found it and has not returned it.

CAMILLA. Or it hasn't been found at all.

OROSZY. Or that.

RUDOLF [*two steps to the center*]. This searching is an outrage. Surely any one who stooped to pick up the diamond could have been seen from the balcony.

OROSZY. They all stooped—when they bowed to the Princess. What was to prevent one of them from picking it up then?

CAMILLA. Will we be searched, too?

OROSZY. They'd better not try. But I don't think they will. The Princess remembers that as she went up the steps to the platform there was a long mirror in which she could see herself. She still had the diamond then.

RUDOLF. The Princess might be mistaken.

OROSZY. Besides, they are only searching those who were on or near the platform.

CAMILLA. So she looked at herself in the mirror.

OROSZY. After all, she's only a woman.

RUDOLF. It's horrible—gives me the cold shivers.

OROSZY. A great, sea-green diamond. A brilliant. [*Looks at CAMILLA*]. They say that it once belonged to the Czar and that it came west as a wedding gift to some queen or other. That stone is known all over the world.

CAMILLA. All over the world—just a stone?

RUDOLF. I used to know its name.

CAMILLA. It has a name?

RUDOLF. Of course. They all have names. This one was called . . . was called . . .

CAMILLA. And where is she now?

RUDOLF. Who?

CAMILLA. The Princess.

OROSZY. On the platform. [*To RUDOLF*]. Did you see her?

RUDOLF. Yes. And she was ghastly to see.

OROSZY. Ghostlike and still, with closed eyes—she sits there on her throne. And on her head the glittering coronet, with its blind gaping hole in the center where the diamond fell out.

CAMILLA. Shall we go in?

OROSZY. Into the ballroom?

CAMILLA. Yes. I'd like to see her.

OROSZY [*rises*]. What has come over you? No, we'll stay here. We've only to go into the ballroom to get involved in the affair. I would not care to have them search you—or me.

CAMILLA. It would be almost interesting.

OROSZY. Don't suggest it. I would not permit it.

CAMILLA. You wouldn't permit it?

OROSZY. Let them try to touch me—or you.

RUDOLF. But if every one else . . .

OROSZY. Not the wife of Sandor Oroszy. I'd knock any one down who dared to touch your body.

CAMILLA. You get so excited!

OROSZY. Fortunately there's not much danger of their attempting it.

CAMILLA. Later, perhaps.

OROSZY. No—they won't.

[*LISKA enters from left very much disturbed*. NIKOLAUS *enters from left*.]

LISKA. Merciful God!

CAMILLA. What is it?

LISKA. Oh, my heart!

[*Hand on her heart*.]

OROSZY. What's the matter with you?

NIKOLAUS. They searched her.

CAMILLA. Searched—you?

OROSZY. Where was your brother?

LISKA. I haven't seen him. He couldn't be found.

OROSZY. Who was with you, then?

NIKOLAUS. I was—but she ran away and left me standing while she joined the throng before the platform.

LISKA. Oh! Oh!

[*She cries.*]

RUDOLF. And you let this happen?

NIKOLAUS. I tell you I didn't know anything about it. When the uproar broke out I lost sight of her. Then the Governor came and asked me in heaven's name to dance. So I danced. I took the precaution of dancing with the Governor's wife.

LISKA. It served me right. Why did I have to get into that crowd?

[*NIKOLAUS crosses back of divan to right.*]

CAMILLA. How did they search you?

LISKA. Through my clothes—under my clothes.

CAMILLA. In a separate room?

LISKA. In the music room. It was terrible. [*Smiling through her tears.*] They searched all the women—[*Laughs.*—it was so funny—

[*She cries, laughs.* OROSZY leads her to the sofa where she sits center.]

CAMILLA. Who searched you?

LISKA. They brought up the women from the coatroom. An old lady ordered them around. I don't know who *she* was, but they called her Your Excellency. All the women were there whose husbands hadn't

dared to object. The cowards. The hubbub in that room! I wanted to stay when they had finished with me, but they sent me out. Of course I'd have to be the second one to be searched.

CAMILLA. Did you have to undress?

LISKA. No— They only felt through our clothes—but there were three of them at once doing that—and then—bright silks and gay ribbons—the air thick with perfumes. Silk stockings, and legs, too. Thick legs and slender pretty legs . . . every one of them in silk and lace. Then more silk and more perfume, and white breasts, too. Oh, if a man had been there to see all that. And such desperate wailing amidst all that perfume. Every one cried. Sweet-scented nymphs threw up their skirts over their heads and sobbed through the silk and lace and then fainted. One old dowager fainted, and what a figure she had—the darlingest lace camisole—quite transparent—you understand. And there were plenty of other little intimate details to be seen. Dear little hand-worked things—you know. The “Only for you, dearest” sort of things. “Only for you, dearest.” And there they were for the whole wide world to see. I'll never forget it. But now I'm too excited . . . [*Catching her breath.*] . . . because . . . because I'm too excited. . . . [*Beginning to cry again.*] But I wouldn't have missed it for the world— [*Cries.*] The funniest thing I've ever seen. *Imagine—if a man had been there.*

RUDOLF [*crosses to LISKA, overcome*]. Horrible!

NIKOLAUS. Poor Liska! If I had known—

CAMILLA. You'd better rest a while.

RUDOLF [*sits left of LISKA*]. Horrible!

OROSZY [*to RUDOLF*]. I'll bring her a lemonade.

[*Exits right center entrance.*]

RUDOLF [*whispering to LISKA*]. Perhaps you could tell me about just a few of those intimate details—with names if possible?

LISKA. Don't be indecent.

NIKOLAUS. Poor Liska.

LISKA. Don't pity me. [*Dries her eyes.*] Envy me like Rudolf here. [*Smiles.*] And during it all the music played. [*To CAMILLA.*] The orchestra, would you believe it, was right behind the glass door. [*Cries again.*] They played as if they were possessed—what a sight! Music and tears and laughter and fainting—and the orchestra played on—louder and louder—and madder and madder—

NIKOLAUS. I think I'll—

[*Starts to go.*]

CAMILLA [*softly*]. Stay here.

[*NIKOLAUS stops.*]

CAMILLA [*correcting herself*]. All of you stay.

NIKOLAUS. I only wanted to—

CAMILLA. Stay here.

RUDOLF [*to LISKA*]. Only tell me what Mrs. Baroczy wore.

LISKA. You mustn't ask such things.

RUDOLF [*rises, crosses left*]. No? Well, think it over.

[*OROSZY returns with a glass of lemonade for LISKA.*]

LISKA [*to RUDOLF*]. Disgusting.

OROSZY [*crosses to right of LISKA*]. Take some of this.

LISKA. Thank you.

[*Drinks.*]

CAPTAIN [*enters from left, very*

much excited. EDMUND, four or five steps behind him. Until the close of the act EDMUND remains by the entrance]. Well, I must say—

[*Stops to take a breath.*]

RUDOLF. We know all about it.

CAPTAIN. Already?

CAMILLA. Yes, everything.

CAPTAIN. All the details?

LISKA. Yes—all of them.

CAPTAIN. Well, what do you think about it?

OROSZY. What do the others think?

CAPTAIN. Who?

CAMILLA. The Princess.

CAPTAIN. The crowd is breaking up. The Princess is leaving the ball.

CAMILLA. She's going?

CAPTAIN. Yes—I heard one of the committee ordering her coach.

CAMILLA. And the diamond?

CAPTAIN. Has not been found.

RUDOLF. But what about the ball?

CAPTAIN. That will go on. The Governor has asked the Committee on Arrangements to continue with the ball as if nothing had happened. Every one is ordered to dance.

CAMILLA. And are they dancing?

CAPTAIN. They have to. One lady fainted and another lost one of her earrings. They've begun an uproar all their own—but nobody pays any attention to them. You know about searching the women?

LISKA [*gives glass to OROSZY*]. Yes.

CAPTAIN [*very angry*]. Well, I must say—

OROSZY. That you'd liked to have been there.

CAPTAIN. I'd have given a year of my life to—

RUDOLF. I can understand that.

[*Goes up to LISKA again.*]

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LISKA [*rises, crosses left*]. Oh, leave me alone.

CAPTAIN. For the present no one is allowed to leave the building.

OROSZY. Quite right. But it's lucky we have two private rooms. The red one, and the one nearest to it down the corridor. Kalponay could not get on without his card game.

CAMILLA. You're really going to play?

OROSZY. After supper—just a little.

[*Exits right center entrance with glass and returns. The orchestra plays the National Anthem again.*]

RUDOLF. They're leaving.

[*The CAPTAIN and RUDOLF go up to the entrance and join EDMUND, who is already looking out onto the ballroom. LISKA crosses left to EDMUND.*]

NIKOLAUS. I must see this. . . .

CAMILLA. Stay here.

NIKOLAUS. Very well.

CAMILLA. Stay with me.

NIKOLAUS. As you wish.

[*LISKA has gone to the entrance.*]

CAMILLA. You can go as far as there.

NIKOLAUS [*crosses to entrance at left*]. Thank you.

[*Goes to the entrance.*]

OROSZY [*crosses down to right of CAMILLA. He has been standing left, alone, and has noticed this short exchange of words. He crosses to CAMILLA*]. Strange.

CAMILLA. What?

OROSZY. Short, quick words. You whispered.

CAMILLA. I did not.

OROSZY. I never knew you to do that before.

CAMILLA. I won't answer you.

OROSZY. I didn't ask you anything. I was merely calling it to your attention.

[*He looks her in the eye and then joins the others at the curtain. They are all looking into the ballroom. LISKA is beyond the door-sill so that one only sees the men, all of whom have their backs to the audience. Camilla stands alone in the center of the stage with the diamond in her closed hand.*]

RUDOLF. What a mob.

CAPTAIN. There—look—she's coming down from the platform.

OROSZY. Where is she?

CAPTAIN. The tall, thin . . .

OROSZY. I see her now.

RUDOLF. A marble statue.

[*The anthem is played with growing crescendo to the end of the act.*]

CAPTAIN. They're going through the great door.

LISKA. How beautiful—lighted candles carried before her. How white she is! Do you see her, Camilla?

CAMILLA [*continuing to stare straight ahead*]. I see.

RUDOLF. Through the glass door?

OROSZY. No, through the center one. Look now—near the lemon trees where they're opening the folding doors.

CAPTAIN. Ah—now I can see. The Prince is smiling.

OROSZY. Not very much.

RUDOLF. How ghastly that empty coronet looks. Now—now you can see it. See where the stone is gone?

NIKOLAUS. Like a statue.

RUDOLF. Mrs. Oroszy. . . .

CAMILLA [*as above*]. I see her.

LISKA. But she holds herself proudly—with her head high. . . .

CAPTAIN. There, there . . . she's coming now . . . she's looking this way.

[*At these words CAMILLA tosses her head. She looks over the heads of the men who have bowed deeply. There is a lit-*

tle pause. Then CAMILLA makes the deep Court bow, but before she lowers her head we see on it a smile of irony and satisfaction. The anthem becomes louder. The characters keep their positions as the]

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ACT TWO

[SCENE: *A private supper room off the corridor. A rather small room, warm in color. There are small, double doors up left leading off to a card room. Also small, double doors near right center, leading off right to the outer hallway. There is a dark red carpet on the floor. A round table about five and a half feet in diameter stands over right center, around which are placed six chairs. Five other chairs are placed about the room. A small buffet is set against the wall over right. A small console table sets against the wall over left. A settee is set left center. A large gas chandelier hangs center.*

AT RISE: RUDOLF is sitting back of table, lighting a cigarette. LISKA is sitting right of table. After a pause, RUDOLF rises and starts left.]

LISKA [*excited*]. Don't leave me, Rudolf!

RUDOLF. Command me, fair lady.

LISKA. Don't desert me in my hour of need. You are the only person who can help me.

RUDOLF. In what capacity?

LISKA. As a man of the world.

RUDOLF. Oh—in that case—

LISKA. You want to go into the card room?

RUDOLF. Oh, never mind.

LISKA. Only a word, a word that may mean life or death to me. Mme. Oroszy is in love.

RUDOLF. Yes—and then?

LISKA. She is excited.

RUDOLF. Yes.

LISKA. She is nervous, distracted — At supper she hardly touched a thing.

RUDOLF. No, she had no appetite.

LISKA. It's killing me!

RUDOLF. Yes. Well?

LISKA. It's gone on for two years now—and now that they're leaving to-morrow—at the very last minute—I see my ruin. She's fallen in love with Nikolaus.

RUDOLF [*looking down the corridor to the card room*]. That's your imagination. Your eyes deceived you when you saw Camilla and Nikolaus talking together— But come with me, Fair Queen.

LISKA. Where?

RUDOLF. To the card room to watch them play. That will distract you.

LISKA [*crosses to RUDOLF*]. Don't leave alone. Help me—advise me. Please—only a minute more—I have no one to go to. My brother is a prig and in a case like this, my Father Confessor wouldn't be much

better. You know Camilla, you know Nikolaus, and you know the world. I depend on you.

RUDOLF. Just now when I begged you for a few facts for my memoirs, you spoke in a quite different tone.

LISKA. What sort of facts?

RUDOLF. You know what I mean.

LISKA. What do you want of me?

RUDOLF. An hour ago, down there in the music room, certain rather intimate secrets were revealed to you—secrets with which I could establish myself for the rest of the season—if I knew them. So naturally I am anxious to become familiar with those secrets. Indeed, I can see very little justification for my existence, if I do not learn just what delightful surprises Mme. Baroczy revealed in the process of being searched.

LISKA. Blackmailer! I open my heart to you—I put my troubled soul in your hands—and you blackmail me! You go beyond decency.

[Crosses front of table.]

RUDOLF. I beg your pardon. Consider that I said nothing.

[Crosses to door. Starts to go.]

LISKA [turns to him, frightened]. No, no, don't go! I didn't mean to insult you. [RUDOLF crosses to center. LISKA sits left of table.] Mme. Baroczy—[RUDOLF gets chair and sits.]—oh, if you knew what you're asking. Mme. Baroczy—a blue silk camisole—very soft and sheer—baby blue, it was—edged with Valenciennes—and a three-corner insert of Guipure lace— Then underneath . . .

RUDOLF. Ah!

LISKA. I could just catch a glimpse of a cream-colored chemise.

RUDOLF. Oh!

LISKA. With narrow mauve ribbons run through at the top.

[RUDOLF writes this in his notebook.]

RUDOLF. Now, I am at your service.

LISKA. This evening—since they talked together—Camilla has been so strange—you'd hardly know her.

RUDOLF. She's excited.

LISKA. She hasn't spoken a word to her husband—not even answered him.

RUDOLF. She's nervous.

LISKA. She's never been that way before.

RUDOLF. She hardly answered me, either.

LISKA. And she tries to be left alone with Nikolaus.

RUDOLF. No!

LISKA. Yes—and when I interrupted them—her eyes kept seeking for Nikolaus— She never did that before.

RUDOLF [rises, starts to put book in pocket]. That is quite true.

LISKA. Just a minute more. [He sits again.] She is quite beside herself. It's only in the last hour that she's fallen in love with him. You're not listening to me.

RUDOLF. Oh, yes, I am.

LISKA. Oh, dear! [Holds book.] I've already told you about Mme. Baroczy . . . [RUDOLF holds book.] Do you know Mme. Wisenfeld, the banker's wife?

RUDOLF. Of course.

LISKA. Fine, white lawn—

RUDOLF. Ah!

LISKA . . . embroidered with some kind of figures. I'm not quite sure, but I think they were cupids.

RUDOLF. Ha, ha.

LISKA. Pink and green rosettes

everywhere. . . . [*Book business.*] Now tell me just this: Shall I go to Camilla, humble myself . . . beg her not to torture him if she doesn't love him? Then at least I'll find out whether she loves him or not.

RUDOLF. Pink and green rosettes?

LISKA. Yes. She'll have to declare herself then, won't she?

RUDOLF. If you speak frankly.

LISKA. I'll go to her— [*Rises, crosses up left.*] But tell me— [*Crosses down left of RUDOLF.*—perhaps I'll spoil everything by doing that— Oh, just say one sensible thing—Rudolf— [*RUDOLF turns in chair, holds up book.*] I know one more—

RUDOLF. Ah!

[*Swings around.*]

LISKA. I saw only three altogether— Oh, I'm so unhappy. . . .

RUDOLF. Why did you come?

LISKA [*half crying*]. They didn't eat anything—how do you account for that?

RUDOLF. Nikolaus has already had his supper.

LISKA. That's possible. But she—?

RUDOLF. Was not hungry.

LISKA. Do you think so? She ate half a peach and two spoonfuls of tutti-frutti ice. What does that mean?

[*Crosses to RUDOLF.*]

RUDOLF. Tutti-frutti— Oh, the ice. That would indicate that she was warm. She wanted to cool off.

LISKA. Then she's in love. And now I'll make sure of it. I'm going to her and ask her. [*RUDOLF puts book away. Rises and starts to go.*] What do you think? Should I or not? Tell me— Oh, dear. . . . The last one I saw—Maria Jurkovitch— [*He takes book again.*] Very simple

—plain white linen—hardly a frill. . . . Very modest looking. Oh, dear, that's the last one I have. . . . I suppose it was meant to look home-made but hemming like that they do only in Paris . . . If she had only said something— But not a word. . . . She just stared, looking straight ahead, thinking and thinking. . . .

RUDOLF. We're all nervous tonight.

LISKA. What do you mean?

RUDOLF. The excitement over the diamond has made conversation quite impossible. I've noticed it myself.

LISKA. That's why I'm imagining things. Of course. That terrible search upset me so. No wonder I'm excited. But she, she doesn't even understand what has happened.

RUDOLF. [*crosses up left*]. Well, *au revoir*.

[*Starts to go.*]

LISKA. Oh, I won't stop you. You are a wicked, evil man. Now that I have no more to betray, you have no patience with me. I should have been more sparing with my three secrets.

RUDOLF [*crosses back to center*]. Oh, my dear, how can you say that! You know I am quite at your service.

LISKA. I know, I know. Go, go and play cards. You have robbed me, and now you leave me. How chivalrous!

[*CAMILLA enters from left. She is followed by NIKOLAUS.*]

CAMILLA. Are we intruding?

LISKA. Unfortunately not. . . . I always bore people. Rudolf is dying to get to the card table.

RUDOLF. No, not at all. I'll stay here now.

LISKA. Because *Camilla* is here.

CAMILLA [*sits*]. Don't stay on my

account. Go to your game. The stakes are so high that it's exciting even to watch them, if there weren't so much smoke. I like to watch them when they're playing high. It always begins tamely—but in half an hour the stakes are sky high.

NIKOLAUS [*beside her*]. Why did you call me out here?

CAMILLA [*softly*]. I wanted to speak with you.

LISKA. You always used to be interested in the playing.

CAMILLA. To-night I am not.

LISKA. Are you going to dance?

CAMILLA. No.

LISKA. You're nervous.

CAMILLA. I am never nervous.

LISKA. Your answers are very short.

CAMILLA. Yes.

LISKA. You didn't eat anything.

CAMILLA [*stands up*]. I don't like the stuff they serve—all drowned in sauces—Galatine, fricassees, salad mayonnaise—French messes. . . . I hate them. Was that answer long enough?

[*Short pause. LISKA crosses up right.*]

OROSZY [*comes from the card room, crosses to center*]. What's the matter, my dear? Why did you leave us? Aren't you feeling well?

CAMILLA. Oh, very well.

NIKOLAUS. Mme. Oroszy found it too smoky in there.

OROSZY. I know. You're upset because they've spoiled your ball. . . . Would you like to go home?

CAMILLA. No, no. It's so beautiful here. Must we be doing something every minute? We'll talk here a while. . . . But don't let me disturb you, dear. We'll go down to the ballroom.

RUDOLF. Are you winning?

OROSZY. Terrifically. [*To RUDOLF.*] Come along, if you want to play—otherwise some one will take your place.

RUDOLF [*sarcastic bow to LISKA. She turns her back on him. Bows to the ladies and exits.*]

OROSZY [*about to go*]. Well, just as you like, my dear. And whenever you want to go home say the word. I'll stop at once. Have you enough champagne? [*Goes to table. Examines the bottles and then rings. To LISKA.*] Where is your brother?

LISKA. Downstairs. Snooping around to make sure he's not missing anything. He hasn't enjoyed himself so much for months.

OROSZY [*to NIKOLAUS*]. Aren't you playing to-night?

CAMILLA. Leave him with *us.

NIKOLAUS. If they will excuse me. . . .

OROSZY [*crosses to NIKOLAUS*]. Half an hour—a quarter of an hour.

NIKOLAUS. A half an hour.

OROSZY. But not a minute more. If you don't come then we'll come and get you.

[*Slaps NIKOLAUS on the back.*]

NIKOLAUS. Agreed.

OROSZY. And if you're going to entertain the ladies you'd better stop being so gloomy. [*To the WAITER who is entering.*] Champagne. Here and in the next room. Dry in there. [*To the ladies.*] What do you want—sweet?

CAMILLA. Dry.

OROSZY. Oh, ho! Then dry here, too. And some coffee in there.

WAITER. How many?

OROSZY. A hundred cups. A barrelfull.

[WAITER *exits*. *The two women sit at the table*—NIKOLAUS *stands near CAMILLA*.]

LISKA [*sits right of table*. *Pause*]. Well—here we are.

[*No one says anything*.]

NIKOLAUS [*to CAMILLA*]. Would you like to go down to the ballroom?

CAMILLA. No.

NIKOLAUS. Not to dance—but just to look on?

CAMILLA. I'd like to stay here.

LISKA [*with emphasis*]. Rudolf, who undoubtedly has a great understanding of human nature, thinks we are all egoists. That each one of us is concerned only with his own problems.

[*The WAITER enters with bottles of champagne. He takes the old ones out of the buckets and puts in the new ones. After he has arranged the empties in a row by the wall he exits. No one speaks during this.*]

LISKA [*as soon as the WAITER has disappeared*]. But egoism is only justifiable as long as it does not interfere with happiness of others.

CAMILLA [*to NIKOLAUS*]. Whom is Liska talking about?

NIKOLAUS. She's only speaking in general.

CAMILLA. Whatever it is I don't understand a word of it. But go on.

NIKOLAUS. But Liska is only . . .

LISKA [*rises and crosses up right*]. Liska only bores every one—is always in the way.

NIKOLAUS [*crosses to left*]. Liska is too sensitive.

LISKA. Don't say anything more—it doesn't take much to make me cry.

[*Puts her hands to her eyes.*]

There is a short pause.

OEZ [*rushes in from right center*

entrance]. Well, I've just come from downstairs!

NIKOLAUS. Yes? What are you so excited about?

OEZ [*breathless*]. Downstairs. . . Tremendous news. . .

NIKOLAUS. Has the diamond been found?

OEZ. No, but the police have come. They've put the secret service men in evening dress—but you can spot them all.

NIKOLAUS. How?

OEZ. By their evening dress. There's a prefect of police and a commissioner. He may even be the director of police—in command. They've searched the entire building—now they're rolling up the carpet on the grand staircase. And there are two sentinels at the door to keep any one from leaving who hasn't a card from the commissioner.

LISKA. What kind of card?

OEZ. I understand they're going to search every one—but not at once. They want as little confusion as possible.

LISKA. What! Oh they wouldn't—they couldn't do that—search me again.

OEZ. Don't worry. I have your card already. And mine, too. [*To CAMILLA*.] And you can get one if you want—

NIKOLAUS. And how are people taking all this?

OEZ. Marvelously! [*LISKA sits right of table*.] Pandemonium has let loose. The dance goes on like mad. Every one has agreed that to-night shall be the wildest since there have been balls in Hungary. No one is going home—the ball will last for two days and two nights. My legs have grown young again. Hurrah

for the diamond, say I! [*To the WAITER who is going from the entrance to the corridor through the room.*] Hey, my lad, something to drink—quick! [*The WAITER pours him a glass and exits right.*] It's a hundred degrees in the shade down there. The women are dancing as if the world ended to-morrow. And the orchestra's scraping away! Hi! [*Drinks.*] Just two old married couples have gone home.

LISKA. Did they search them, too?

OEZ [*sits at the table*]. No. You don't have to be searched if you know the right people. A courier has been dispatched to the Governor's house.

NIKOLAUS. In the middle of the night?

OEZ. No one's sleeping to-night. They send reports to him every half hour.

LISKA. And all on account of this stone? Does it matter so much?

OEZ. Does it matter? A flawless, sea-green stone weighing over a thousand carats! Although it's lost a little from two cuttings. The best stone cutters in Amsterdam worked four years on it. It's valued at four and a half million gulden.

[*The WAITER enters from outside with the coffee and goes into the card room.*]

LISKA. Four and a half million?

OEZ. It has a beautiful name—"The Sun God." It belonged to the Russian crown for a hundred years, then the King of Spain had it; from him it came to the court of the Princess—and now it's part of the Imperial treasure.

[*CAMILLA stands up.*]

OEZ [*stops, a little surprised*]. That's—

CAMILLA. Go on.

[*She goes slowly to the right. Stands leaning against the stove, where she listens.*]

OEZ [*looks at CAMILLA for a moment in astonishment and then continues*]. That's why they call it the crown diamond. And do you know how old it is? More than a thousand years. It was found in India in a Hindu temple. It was the eye of a Buddhist image. For over a thousand years the image showed Buddha sitting on a swan. The Buddha had four faces which looked to the four corners of the world.

LISKA. Where did you learn all this?

OEZ. I found an encyclopedia upstairs in the library. [*Rises, puts down glass.*] I must go and tell the card players. . . .

LISKA [*rises, hurrying after him*]. I'll go with you.

OEZ [*stops*]. Are you going to play?

LISKA. No. Are you going to?

OEZ. Yes.

LISKA. You're playing again—so soon?

OEZ. You're interfering again—so soon?

LISKA. You'll only lose again.

OEZ. Must you always run after me? Why don't you stay here with Camilla? What are you going to do in there?

LISKA. Watch you.

OEZ. Oh. . . . [*Starts to go.*] Let me ask you one thing. Don't speak to me while I'm playing and when I begin to lose leave the room yourself before I send you out. Oh, I don't know what I'm going to do with you!

[*Goes out to card room, LISKA following him. There is a*

short pause. CAMILLA goes to the middle door, leans out and looks nervously up and down the corridor.]

NIKOLAUS [*sitting*]. How beautiful! It was the eye of a god. Through it a god looked out on the world for a thousand years.

[*The WAITER returns from card room and goes out through the center door.*]

CAMILLA [*after a little pause*]. Do you love me?

NIKOLAUS [*stands up slowly*]. You—ask me—

CAMILLA. I ask if you love me?

NIKOLAUS. Is this true? Are we in a dream? [*As if frightened.*] Camilla!

CAMILLA. Do you love me so much—so wildly—until death—as you have said?

NIKOLAUS. You ask me that, Camilla?

CAMILLA. Answer me. Was all that true? Are you ready to do anything for me that I ask?

NIKOLAUS. Anything.

[*There is a short pause.*]

CAMILLA. To forsake everything for me—everything—your home, your music, your friends, your sister, your mother?

NIKOLAUS. Everything.

CAMILLA. If I say I love you and that I am yours—is there anything in the world you won't do for me?

NIKOLAUS. Do you need to ask—when you know better than I? Camilla, what does this mean?

CAMILLA. You must have noticed—[*Steps back, looks off left.*—how differently I have spoken to you. How I have clung to you.

NIKOLAUS. I did not dare. . . .

CAMILLA. All evening long I have asked you to stay with me. . . .

NIKOLAUS. I thought it was only a mood—how could I believe that you really. . . .

CAMILLA. I caught you with my eyes. . . .

NIKOLAUS. It still lasts—the fleeting moment has not ended— Oh, but now comes the word—I know it— [*Turns away.*] Now you are going to tell me that it is not true.

CAMILLA. Could you suffer for me?

NIKOLAUS. I *have* suffered for you. . . .

CAMILLA. Suffer and fight for me?

NIKOLAUS. With my last breath.

[*Turns to her.*]

CAMILLA. Stand by my side, fold me in your arms, strongly and proudly, even if I were not the woman I am to-day?

NIKOLAUS. What could you be that I would not give my life for you?

CAMILLA. If I were an outcast, pursued, haunted—would you be with me? [*Loudly.*] Would you come with me?

NIKOLAUS. Always—with you.

CAMILLA. In disgrace and shame? . . . If I loved you—if I had nothing but you—only you forever. . . .

NIKOLAUS. I have nothing—what do I lose to go with you?

CAMILLA. And if my husband followed me, ready to kill me. . . .

NIKOLAUS. To die for you. . . .

CAMILLA [*more and more excited*]. And if I were abandoned and guilt-laden—if I had stolen. . . .

NIKOLAUS. If—what did you say?

CAMILLA. If I were a thief. . . .

NIKOLAUS. If you were what? How your eyes burn!

CAMILLA. Yes! Yes! If I tell you I am!

NIKOLAUS. What?

CAMILLA. Yes—if I tell you. . . .
[*Looks off left.*] The sea-green stone.
[*She crosses quickly in front of the table so that no one will hear her in the next room.*] The crown diamond—the eye of the Hindu God. I've stolen it.

NIKOLAUS [*leaning over the table toward her*]. You've stolen it?

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. You've stolen it?

CAMILLA. Yes.

[*Pause. OROSZY walks quietly and slowly in.*]

OROSZY. Your time is up.

NIKOLAUS. My time? Oh, yes. . . .

OROSZY. What's the matter? Have you been arguing?

CAMILLA. No.

OROSZY. You look so flushed, my dear.

CAMILLA. It's these women. I hear they've been talking about me again.

OROSZY. How many times must I tell you not to think about them? They're all beneath you. And—[*Indicating NIKOLAUS.*—he can't stop them from talking.

CAMILLA. I'm not blaming him.

[*Sits in front of the table.*]

OROSZY. Do you want to stay here?

CAMILLA. Yes.

OROSZY. I'll take you down to see the Jurkovitch sisters—you always like them. They're dancing downstairs as they haven't danced for years.

CAMILLA. No. I don't want to see any more women. Darling, go and leave us here. It's so quiet—and you're near me.

OROSZY. Do you need me?

CAMILLA. No—I only mean—I can feel I'm near you.

OROSZY [*to NIKOLAUS*]. But then Kalponay will take your place.

NIKOLAUS. I give it up to him.

OROSZY [*a little sharply*]. I have held it for you until now.

NIKOLAUS. The place is quite free now.

OROSZY. It was reserved for you.

NIKOLAUS. You can do with it as you like.

OROSZY. Very well.

CAMILLA. Leave him here with me!

OROSZY. But later. . . .

CAMILLA. Never mind that.

NIKOLAUS [*with a forced smile*]. You see—a tyrant commands me.

OROSZY [*looks at them both and then repeats mechanically*]. Yes—a tyrant. [*CAMILLA takes a drink.*] You ought not to drink, my dear.

CAMILLA. Only a drop.

OROSZY. But as a rule.

CAMILLA. We need wine to-night. You worry me so. It makes me uncomfortable to have you always watching me. Please leave me here. I'd like to stay and talk and dream. I'm so happy here.

OROSZY. If you're happy—that is the most important thing.

[*Exits. NIKOLAUS accompanies him to the door. CAMILLA sits motionless at her place. NIKOLAUS remains standing by the door.*]

NIKOLAUS. You said it twice. . . .

[*There is a short pause.*]

CAMILLA. I have stolen it.

NIKOLAUS [*goes to her*]. You are putting me to the test. Driving me through a flooded stream like you

horses. You are always torturing some one?

CAMILLA. No. [*Pause.*] These drawing-room heroes so sweetly perfumed. . . . [*With a look of scorn.*] You're all very anxious for an adventure—a nice little adventure—quiet and safe. . . . [*Standing up.*] But a great adventure. . . . [*Walks past him, looking back at him.*] How serious you have become!

NIKOLAUS. Because you're playing with me—for you a man is only a dog or a horse—to beat or spur. . . .

CAMILLA. No. I don't do that. I am honest— My heart is clean. . . . At last I can speak—there is no one to laugh at me now. They make fun of me—but I am a woman, not one of your simpering fashion plates. . . . I do not lie.

NIKOLAUS. You don't lie?

CAMILLA. No. And I want to know whether you will come with me, in spite of everything?

NIKOLAUS [*passionately*]. Wherever you lead me—wherever you send me. . . . [*Goes up to her.*] You didn't lie?

CAMILLA. No.

NIKOLAUS. You—then you—

CAMILLA. Yes.

NIKOLAUS. It's not possible.

CAMILLA. I found it.

NIKOLAUS. Where?

CAMILLA. Behind the curtain—downstairs where we were sitting. Now I can tell you everything—and you can't change me— You must listen to me. You talked to me and I listened. I listened with my blood throbbing through my veins. [*A very short pause for breath.*] As I've always listened to you. . . . [*A pause.*] Then you went away—left me alone—but your wasted life . . .

your suffering . . . your terrible love remained with me. As I sat there alone, the thought that I must leave you once more held me in agony. . . . [*Breaking out.*] Night after night—biting my pillow—as I did all those months—all last year at home—and then you had gone—and as I sat there alone, pressing my hands against my aching breasts, as I sat there—I saw it—on the floor by the curtain. I picked it up—I thought it must be glass. I didn't know what it was—and then that man came and said that a diamond had been lost—and there it was in my hand. I thought I'd wait until he'd told me the whole story—and I put my hand behind my back— Then the others came—and—I thought—you loved me and . . . [*Almost screaming.*] Come, come, we must go, we must go! This is our only chance. . . .

NIKOLAUS. You're telling me the truth?

CAMILLA. The truth— If there's no one coming . . . [*Looks around.*] Look out, there . . .

NIKOLAUS [*leans over the table and looks down corridor to card room*].

No one. The corridor is long. BURLINGAME

CAMILLA. Are you sure? PUBLIC

NIKOLAUS. No one. LIB.

CAMILLA. There.

[*Puts the stone on the table.*
Pause.]

NIKOLAUS [*looking at the stone*]. And—and . . .

CAMILLA. Now mark me: I shall not give it up.

NIKOLAUS. Not—give—it—back?

CAMILLA. No. [*Covers the stone slowly with her hand.*] Now you know.

NIKOLAUS. Not give it back?

CAMILLA. Does that terrify you

so? Ah—why did you fall in love with a stupid woman? I shall not give it back. A clever woman would. *I shall not give it back.* Now I ask you again—do you love me?

NIKOLAUS [*in ecstasy*]. I—I love you— It is only a dream—nothing is true—but I love you, Camilla.

[*Kneels before her.*]

CAMILLA. You talked of your miserable life, but you never thought what my life was. You only knew I beat the horses until they were bloody and galloped through flooded streams. You don't know that my life is unbearable. Shall I give back the eye of the Hindu god so that I may go home again? Do you think I like horses and loneliness? And every one makes fun of me because my husband disciplines, nags and makes me feel small—and yet is always wanting me— [*With stone clutched in her hands.*] As long as I have this, I can laugh at my slavery. It sets me free. It takes me away. I am weak and my husband is strong, sinister and terrible. He is like an iron prison. Only with this can I escape from him. Only if I jump into the torrent which will sweep me away from him. Then he cannot come after me. When he learns what I have done, he won't. Then I will be dead for him, and I can begin to live.

NIKOLAUS. My glorious goddess!

CAMILLA [*continues in another tone*]. For an hour I've held it here in my hand—and I couldn't tell any one. And if I couldn't have told you now, I would have screamed aloud—"Take me—take me, for I have it!" But now you're coming with me for you have dared to whisper in my ear. And I have stolen it only because I

love you. It is you who have made me sin. For two years your hot breath has made my temples throb, my body burn for you. Your books I threw away; your words I heard and forgot. It was not easy—but at home—on a wild horse—I have ridden your words out of my soul. And nights I slept—sleep blotted out your words—and your face. But then you would begin again—light new fires. . . . But now . . . [*Clenching the diamond in her hand.*] I hold you in my hand. I have stolen and you know of it. Now you are both mine forever—this diamond and you. . . . Now you're coming with me—unless you have lied to me!

NIKOLAUS. I lie to you?

CAMILLA [*takes a few steps back and listens*]. I have it. And now they are hot on the trail. You can hear their steps as they run this way and that—up and down the stairs—send couriers—stay up all night—telegraph the King. And I took it—and so I hold them all here—the beautiful old Princess—governors and commissioners of police—the Russian court and the princesses of Spain—the King's treasure . . . I hold them all here in my hand. I have dared to take it—and I shall not give it back!

NIKOLAUS [*puts arms around CAMILLA*]. I adore you!

CAMILLA [*crosses left center with NIKOLAUS behind her and his arms over her shoulder*]. And don't ask me to give it back. I have still to conquer it—it struggles in my heart, but I'll hold fast until it is tame and quiet, until it stops its struggling . . . until it obeys like a dog and I can do what I want with it. . . . But you must help me. . . . Everything that I am, I give to you. As I stand before

you, so am I yours— only yours— You are my lover and—so at last, I kneel to you, cry to you, beseech you. Love me! Love me!

NIKOLAUS. How I adore you!

CAMILLA. I want to go away with you!

NIKOLAUS. With me!

CAMILLA. We'll take it with us—far away. Over the sea—with my diamond—with you!

NIKOLAUS. With me!

CAMILLA. The doors locked—the lights low—you waiting for me—in a great room . . . and I will wear it on my beautiful white neck for you.

NIKOLAUS. Wonderful—you magnificent white rose. With you—over the sea!

CAMILLA. We must go— They are all hunting for it—searching . . . You must come with me now—at once!

NIKOLAUS. Now? That is madness!

CAMILLA. But we must. We can't give it back—it's too late for that. And I won't give it back—for it has given me you—even if they find it on me, I won't give it up. They'll have to fight with me—torture me—cut off my hand before I give it up. . . .

NIKOLAUS. It isn't me you love—it's the sea-green stone. . . . I wish I could smash it—grind it to powder, for it's the only thing you love. . . .

CAMILLA. I have given it to you—to no one else. . . .

NIKOLAUS. You have bewitched me—I'll go with you. Oh, sweet madness. . . .

[*About to take her in his arms.*
Pause.]

LISKA [*enters from right*]. Niko-

laus. [NIKOLAUS *crosses left*. CAMILLA *to right*.] The men asked me to tell you your place is being held for you. [*No one answers.*] Kaponay is losing heavily and there aren't enough for the game. [*No one answers.*] I asked them not to send me—but they insisted—otherwise I would not have intruded.

CAMILLA. You are not intruding.

[*Turns and sits at left of table.*]

LISKA. Your husband asked me to come and talk to you—since you don't want to come in and you don't want to dance. And you don't want to see Edmund and you don't want to see the Jurkovitch girls. I told him you certainly didn't want to see me. But again he insisted. I never would have come of my own accord.

CAMILLA [*to NIKOLAUS*]. Will you please go in and tell them that I don't want you to play and that I want you here. Then come back.

NIKOLAUS. I am at your service.

[*Bows and exits up left. There is a short pause.*]

LISKA [*very nervous*]. I couldn't watch them any longer. They're playing so high. They sit there as quiet as death. They're playing for thousands. Your husband is winning. He tries to lose, but he can't. The gold keeps pouring toward him. They're all white as ghosts. I couldn't stand it any longer—that's why I came in here.

CAMILLA. That's not why you came, Liska.

LISKA. Why, then?

CAMILLA. That's not why you came.

LISKA. Yes, really—that's the only reason.

CAMILLA. Don't lie.

LISKA [*looking at her, fearfully*].

Something has happened to you. You carry your head so high—your voice sounds so strange—and how beautiful you are. So beautiful that I would like to tear the heart from my body.

CAMILLA. That's why you came, Liska.

LISKA [*goes to her, kneels before her*]. How I envy you—how terribly I envy you.

CAMILLA. That's why you came, Liska.

LISKA. No—not from jealousy. No, Camilla. I've come as a beggar—see how humbly I kneel before you. I came to ask mercy of you—beautiful Camilla. . . .

CAMILLA. Mercy?

LISKA. He'll be back soon. I must speak quickly.

CAMILLA. What do you want?

LISKA. To beg you for—

CAMILLA. For what?

LISKA. For him.

CAMILLA. What?

LISKA. Give him to me. Throw him back to me. You don't need him. Give him to me—let him fall so that I may pick him up.

CAMILLA. Give him to you?

LISKA. As long as he has the slightest hope, he won't leave you. You're going away and I'll be left here with him to suffer for the last smile you give him—at the station—He will live on that smile till next winter. You don't want him—and if only you sent him away once and for all—and then went away yourself—perhaps in his grief he'd think of me. The lowest of women might help him then—to comfort him in his anguish. And I would be as proud as a queen—[*Sighs.*—to be that lowest of women. No woman ever made such a confession to an-

other woman—and—that is why I came to you.

[*Short pause.*]

CAMILLA. I won't give him up.

LISKA. You—want him?

CAMILLA. No—no more than any other.

LISKA. You won't give him up?

CAMILLA. No.

LISKA. Do you love him?

CAMILLA. No.

LISKA. And yet you won't give him up?

CAMILLA. No.

LISKA. How cruel you are—and all the more magnificent because of your cruelty. That's the most terrible part of it. You fascinate me. . . . If I were a man, I could die for you. How merciless. . . .

CAMILLA. Say what you say behind my back—how stupid.

[*Czardas music from the distance.*]

LISKA. You are beautiful. You sit there as if you had handed down a death sentence. There's nothing human about you.

CAMILLA. Oh, stop—leave me alone.

LISKA. If you had only been angry—if you could only hate me.

CAMILLA. I wasn't even listening to you—I was thinking of something else.

LISKA [*crying*]. So hateful and so beautiful. . . .

CAMILLA. Powder your nose, they'll see you've been crying.

LISKA [*goes to the mirror, like a child*]. But what with?

CAMILLA [*points to where her vanity case lies*]. There's everything there.

[*LISKA arranging herself before the mirror.*]

NIKOLAUS [*comes in from the card room*]. They give me another half hour.

LISKA. Then I can go back.
[*Pause.*] Don't try to stop me.

[*Exits. Short pause.*]

CAMILLA [*gets up quickly*]. A half hour?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. That is enough—almost too much. Now . . .

NIKOLAUS. Now?

CAMILLA. We must leave here at once.

NIKOLAUS. Where to?

CAMILLA. To your rooms—at last—to-night—with you. And then my husband will find out that I have left him and that I love you and that to-morrow will be too late, for I will be yours.

NIKOLAUS. To-night—with me?

CAMILLA. Now you are my lover—now you are a thief. Don't draw back. Kiss me!

NIKOLAUS [*looks down the corridor*]. If any one should look in.

CAMILLA. Let them look. Kiss me—and let him come and kill us. Kiss me!

[*Pulls the cord of the chandelier—the gas lights slowly go down. Downstage is quite dark. On the wall there is a broad streak of light from the corridor. NIKOLAUS downstage in the dark with CAMILLA. He kisses her. Then on the wall there appears the shadow of a man. Some one is coming slowly down the corridor.*]

NIKOLAUS. Some one's coming!

[*CAMILLA springs back into the path of the light. NIKOLAUS remains in the dark. There is*

a short pause. The cædardas is heard.]

OROSZY [*enters from the corridor*]. Why is it dark in here?

CAMILLA. I am here.

OROSZY. Did you turn down the lights?

CAMILLA. Yes.

OROSZY. Why?

CAMILLA. It's so nice to sit alone here listening to the music of the dance.

OROSZY. Where is Nikolaus?

[*NIKOLAUS makes a movement in the dark.*]

CAMILLA [*saying this quickly to prevent NIKOLAUS from speaking*]. I sent him downstairs.

OROSZY. Why?

CAMILLA. I wanted to be alone. I didn't want any one with me. No one.

OROSZY. What's the matter with you?

CAMILLA. You know I often feel like this.

OROSZY. But you never . . .

CAMILLA. But to-night I just wanted to sit in the dark and listen to the noise. I don't want to go home.

OROSZY. You should have gone down with him—if it's the noise you want.

CAMILLA. He bores me.

OROSZY. He is in love with you.

CAMILLA. That's why he bores me.

OROSZY. That is not true.

CAMILLA. He bores me.

OROSKY. You're excited—your eyes shine as if you were on fire with . . .

CAMILLA. Be nice and leave me alone. I don't want to go home. You have won all the money from the men—

OROSZY. Does that trouble you? Is that what makes you so excited?

CAMILLA. Let them win it back. Don't ruin them. And leave me. I left on account of them. They sit there as if they had been sentenced to death.

OROSZY. I don't want their money.

CAMILLA. Go. I'll wait here for you. Then we'll go downstairs.

[*There is a short pause.*]

OROSZY. I'll go—I won't even turn—[*Looks at gas chandelier.*—I believe you.

CAMILLA. And so you should.

OROSZY. But don't forget who I am.

CAMILLA. I know.

OROSZY. Don't forget that my word is steel and my fist . . .

CAMILLA. Don't say another word.

OROSZY. You know what I am.

CAMILLA. You are a man of honor. You won't—you can't make beggars of those men in there. . . .

OROSZY. I shall do as you wish—and you . . .

CAMILLA. I'll wait for you. [*Pause. OROSZY exits slowly. NIKOLAUS and CAMILLA do not move from their positions. After OROSZY's shadow is no longer visible, she re-*

mains motionless a moment. Then she speaks in tones of command.] Don't move. Stay where you are. I'm going down to the vestibule now where I'll wait for you. You stay here for a minute and then go into the card room. Act as if you'd just come from downstairs . . . tell them what's going on down there. Then come down to me. [*NIKOLAUS goes toward her with arms outstretched, but she motions him away.*] Sh! Go now—

[*NIKOLAUS passes his hand over his forehead, and then goes slowly into the path of the light and out the corridor. The czardas continues uninterruptedly below. CAMILLA watches him until he is out of sight, then she pulls the cord of the chandelier, then, after looking carefully around, she holds the diamond up to the light and looks at it triumphantly. Then she closes her hand over it, and after one last hasty look around, she hurries out through the center door.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[*SCENE: A lobby near the door of the grand stairway. A large, high-pillared room with entrances at right and left. There is a high arch about eight feet wide at the center, through which can be seen the grand stairway leading from right to left. Back of the stairway are seen several large high windows, through which one sees the darkness of night gradually change to early morning light. The*

only furnishings seen are two benches, one in the corner up right, and one in the corner up left. Also two stools over right center and one stool over left center.

AT RISE: The FIRST COATROOM WOMAN crosses the stage carrying coats over arm. The SECOND COATROOM WOMAN from left does the same. As the last one crosses she meets the first one returning empty-handed.]

FIRST WOMAN [*from left*]. They're still dancing up there.

THIRD WOMAN. Czardas?

FIRST WOMAN. Yes.

THIRD WOMAN. I do love the czardas.

FIRST WOMAN. I don't.

THIRD WOMAN. I'd give anything to dance the czardas, but by the time I'm through work the gypsies have gone home. Are there many left up there?

FIRST WOMAN. Only the craziest of them. And they're getting ready to go. [*The SECRET SERVICE MAN appears on the balcony and stands with his back to the audience.* FIRST WOMAN *points to the coats in the arms of the THIRD.*] Those things belong to the people in the small room. They're dancing there by themselves. They've half the gypsies in with them. Some goings-on in there!

THIRD WOMAN. Czardas?

FIRST WOMAN [*crosses left.*] And what a czardas! They are doing it on their hands.

THIRD WOMAN. And they haven't found the diamond yet?

FIRST WOMAN. No.

THIRD WOMAN. Such high and mighty folk never come to the coat-room.

FIRST WOMAN. They don't even know there is one.

THIRD WOMAN. Did you ever hear of a Prince leaving anything in a coatroom? Things don't get lost there.

FIRST WOMAN. If they'd left the diamond here it wouldn't be missing now.

THIRD WOMAN. Just see them leaving a diamond in the coat-room!

SECOND WOMAN [*entering right*]. Have you got two twenty? Get it out. Two twenty's shouting for his things.

[*The FIRST WOMAN starts to go out as the SECOND WOMAN comes in. She stops at the other side of the stage and looks up at the SECRET SERVICE MAN. Then she makes a sign to the other two women to look at him.*]

THIRD WOMAN [*crosses right*]. I am going.

SECOND WOMAN [*notices the signal of the FIRST WOMAN*]. What's the matter?

FIRST WOMAN [*puts her finger to her mouth and points with her hand*]. Police! [*The three of them go up on tiptoe to the balcony.*] Detective!

[*The SECRET SERVICE MAN suddenly turns around. The three women scatter. The SECRET SERVICE MAN comes slowly down the stairs. As he is about to exit he meets the SECOND WOMAN who is just coming back.*]

SECRET SERVICE MAN. Where did you come from?

SECOND WOMAN. From the little room.

SECRET SERVICE MAN. Are there still people in there?

SECOND WOMAN. Yes, but they're going.

SECRET SERVICE MAN. Thanks.

[*Exits left entrance. The SECOND WOMAN watches him off. Short pause. CAMILLA enters right. Takes a few steps, then stops and looks after the detective.*]

SECOND WOMAN [*approaches CA-*

MILLA]. Madame would like her coat?

CAMILLA [*startled*]. What? What do you want?

SECOND WOMAN. I am the coat-room attendant. [CAMILLA *hands her her check*.] Shall I bring it in here?

CAMILLA. Yes.

SECOND WOMAN [*looking at the check*]. That number's downstairs.

[*Exits right center. Short pause.*

CAMILLA *crosses left, then up left center. Sits up left. The*

COMMISSIONER, the SECRETARY and the DOORMAN *appear left center*.]

COMMISSIONER. Then there are four exits in all.

DOORMAN. Yes, Your Excellency.

COMMISSIONER. Three from the grand vestibule?

SECRETARY. Three. Two of them I closed at once. Only the middle door is open. Captain Bruckner is there with his men.

COMMISSIONER. And the fourth exit?

DOORMAN. That's at the foot of the servants' stairs. You go through the little hall, then through the restaurant and the kitchens.

SECRETARY. Branko is there.

COMMISSIONER. How do you get there?

DOORMAN. This way, please.

[*Pointing*.]

COMMISSIONER. Don't yell so.

DOORMAN. I beg your pardon. [*Whispering*.] This way, please. [*All three exeunt right. A short pause. CAMILLA crosses to left then back to center. Meets NIKOLAUS.*]

NIKOLAUS [*hurries in—he looks nervously after the group of officials. Then quickly to CAMILLA*]. Have you waited long?

CAMILLA. Yes. What are you looking at? Do you know who they are?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. Are you afraid?

NIKOLAUS. Afraid?

CAMILLA. I waited for you so long I finally went upstairs again. I've only just returned.

COMMISSIONER [*enters slowly from the right entrance*]. I beg your pardon! If I might have a word. . . .

NIKOLAUS. With me?

COMMISSIONER. Yes—just a word—if you'll be so kind.

NIKOLAUS. Surely.

[*Goes slowly over to him. CAMILLA rises*.]

COMMISSIONER [*to CAMILLA*]. If madame will excuse me. [*To NIKOLAUS*.] You are Dr. Steinburger, are you not?

NIKOLAUS. No. My name is Kornady.

COMMISSIONER. I *beg* your pardon! I am Commissioner Stoff.

NIKOLAUS. Kornady — Nikolaus Kornady.

[*They shake hands*.]

COMMISSIONER. Are you acquainted with the Doctor?

NIKOLAUS. I have not had the honor.

COMMISSIONER. He looks very like you. As you hurried by just now, I could have sworn . . .

NIKOLAUS. I am very sorry.

COMMISSIONER. Forgive my disturbing you.

NIKOLAUS. Certainly.

[*COMMISSIONER bows to CAMILLA and goes off right*.]

CAMILLA [*crosses to NIKOLAUS, who takes a step back*]. You are frightened.

NIKOLAUS. I?

CAMILLA. Yes, you're frightened.

NIKOLAUS. That's the second one who has spoken to me.

CAMILLA. Why were you so long? Where were you?

NIKOLAUS. In the card room.

CAMILLA. What were you doing there?

NIKOLAUS. I talked with them—and watched them play for a while.

CAMILLA. All this time?

NIKOLAUS. I had difficulty in getting away as it was. They wanted to keep me.

CAMILLA. *All this time?*

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. You're not telling the truth. When you went into the card room I waited at the other end of the corridor. I saw you come out—and then you stayed outside walking up and down. Even though you knew I was waiting for you.

NIKOLAUS. I thought you were downstairs. You wanted to wait down here.

CAMILLA. Is that why you didn't come?

NIKOLAUS [*a little embarrassed*]. Well—I did come—I'm here. . . .

[*Crosses left center.*]

CAMILLA. Why did you walk up and down the corridor?

NIKOLAUS. My head was swimming—I was feverish. I thought my heart would jump out of my body!

CAMILLA. You were thinking things over.

NIKOLAUS. No. Only—so much had happened to me—in so brief a time—I had to live it through again. If I hadn't done that I couldn't believe even now that it is all true. Even the kiss I had to . . .

CAMILLA. Did my husband say anything?

NIKOLAUS. Not a word.

CAMILLA. He is playing?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. And he's still winning?

NIKOLAUS. Terrifically. And only he. Matyas is ruined.

CAMILLA. My husband didn't say anything?

NIKOLAUS. No.

CAMILLA. Didn't he look at you?

NIKOLAUS. Oh, yes.

CAMILLA. Hard?

NIKOLAUS. Very hard.

CAMILLA. And you didn't say anything to him?

NIKOLAUS. No. I stood quietly behind Matyas and looked at his cards.

CAMILLA. And that's when my husband looked at you?

NIKOLAUS. Yes.

CAMILLA. And never took his eyes from you?

NIKOLAUS. No. [*Turns to right.*] Strange . . . that you ask that . . . that you know . . .

CAMILLA [*her back to NIKOLAUS*]. I know that look. It's horrible. He never shouts, he never beats any one—he is never loud. One of our people cheated him once. My husband didn't scold him—he only looked at him . . . in that horrible way. And the fellow knew that he must go . . . and he went . . . out through the garden. . . . And when he was a long way off he turned fearfully around—and my husband had not moved—and was still looking at him. As you went out he was still looking at you.

NIKOLAUS. That I don't know.

CAMILLA. But I do. And you were afraid of him.

NIKOLAUS. No.

CAMILLA. Oh, yes, you were. You

paced up and down the corridor—you wanted to go back—to find out whether he was still looking after you.

NIKOLAUS. How can you think that?

CAMILLA. I did not think you would falter, but you did. You thought things over and you did not come. And now, when the Commissioner spoke to you . . . [*Suddenly.*] You are afraid.

NIKOLAUS. I?

CAMILLA. You don't know it yourself, perhaps, but I know you are. You are pale. And I, for the first time in all my life, am quite calm. I don't hear any more voices. The confusion—everything around has been stilled. I am alone in the world, and I rise, float higher and higher, away from every one—while you beside me are pale and trembling—dragging me down—I feel as if I had no body—as if I were only desire and love—and so I rise—but with a leaden body beside me—which I must carry with me—pale and frightened.

NIKOLAUS. What makes you talk this way? Why do you think that?

CAMILLA. Your face . . . everything . . . I feel it.

[*Crosses up right.*]

NIKOLAUS. My face?

CAMILLA. You question me. Why don't you say "No!" and carry me away so quickly that you take the breath from me?

NIKOLAUS [*follows*]. You . . . you are mistaken. You're excited.

CAMILLA. I am as calm as death.

[*NIKOLAUS moves.*]

CAMILLA. But don't move, don't speak. . . . We ought to have left long ago. Long ago I should have said "Why are we standing here?"

[*Crosses down near chair.*] "We must go—we must go." [*Crosses to right center.*] The seconds are priceless. But I don't trust myself— If I turn to go—then a word—a movement from you—a false step—then I would go to pieces. [*NIKOLAUS comes down.*] Don't speak a word—not a word. Now I am afraid—lest it is not true—for fear one little thing can destroy everything.

NIKOLAUS. If it's something in my face . . .

CAMILLA. In your voice—I'm so sensitive now—I hear and see like a thief—

NIKOLAUS. In my voice you can only hear the pain of the love that is torturing me. . . .

CAMILLA. Torturing you now?

NIKOLAUS [*stammering*]. Because—only one thing—because—

CAMILLA. That—again?

NIKOLAUS. Because it was not on my account— I am jealous—jealous of your diamond—as I have never been jealous of any man.

CAMILLA. I love you.

NIKOLAUS. *And* what you have done—you love me, yes, but only because of what you have done. Your crime—that's what you love.

CAMILLA. No. You.

NIKOLAUS. Not as much as your crime.

CAMILLA. You!

NIKOLAUS. Your crime—your mad, splendid adventure. That new life of yours—your freedom. Me, you look down on, you despise—but your sea-green stone, you adore!

CAMILLA. You!

[*Expressionless, with eyes closed.*]

NIKOLAUS. And I have become such a miserable beggar, have suffered so much, that still I crawl to your

feet. I bleed from a thousand wounds, but you have called me to you at last, you have kissed my thirsty mouth, so that I may die. . . .

CAMILLA. Are you afraid of that, too?

NIKOLAUS. If it were for you! But I am being destroyed for the sake of your diamond.

CAMILLA. You—only you I love!

NIKOLAUS. To-night.

CAMILLA. Always!

NIKOLAUS. How mechanically you say that—as if you weren't thinking of me at all, as if it were the last tired beat of your wings . . . as if you hoped somehow I might believe it.

CAMILLA. Believe it.

NIKOLAUS. And if you had to swear it?

CAMILLA. I swear it!

NIKOLAUS. You swear it . . . flat, empty words.

CAMILLA. What do you want of me?

NIKOLAUS. Only one thing. There is only one proof. . . .

CAMILLA. And . . . that is . . .

NIKOLAUS. You know—you know very well.

CAMILLA [*seeing what is coming*]. Oh, God!

NIKOLAUS. You want me to say it—and I shall say it—if it is the end of me.

CAMILLA [*begging*]. Nikolaus!

NIKOLAUS. Shall I say it?

CAMILLA. Nikolaus!

NIKOLAUS. Give back the diamond!

CAMILLA. Oh, that is it. I knew it!

[*Crosses left.*]

NIKOLAUS. The mad whim of a moment, a wild caprice—an unlucky chance the Devil threw at your feet.

Why do you cling to it if you love me?

CAMILLA. I didn't know of my love. It was that that showed it to me. If you don't feel that then you can never understand my sin and my love. One lighted the other. . . .

NIKOLAUS. But now you know of your love. Why do you need the other? Throw it away—and love me.

CAMILLA [*crosses up left center*]. Now you're thinking of what your—[NIKOLAUS *crosses to center.*—mother will say.

NIKOLAUS. No—I killed all that in me when I was upstairs. . . .

CAMILLA [*comes down right of stool*]. And of what your friends will say . . . Nikolaus Kornady . . . absconder—a thief. At the Casino they will . . .

NIKOLAUS. Don't talk of that. I'm not thinking of my mother—nor of any one. . . .

CAMILLA. And what of my mother? I have a mother, too. And my friends, my honor? I have those, too. My husband—the disgrace. Arrest—the moment when they take me. And death if I fail—a bullet in my heart—and a grave wherever I drop when I turn the pistol against my breast—my eyes closed—

NIKOLAUS. All that you hold in your right hand—only one little gesture—and God's blessed blue sky will open above us—summer will come laughing to our hearts— You have only to open your hand.

CAMILLA. I am to throw it away—give it back?

NIKOLAUS. Years of quiet happiness . . . as God ordained for simple people—two hot-blooded young people, brought together by Nature—to the great fulfillment. [CAMILLA

smiles bitterly.] They look into each other's eyes—and there are not years enough to quench their thirst. . . . Oh, throw it away, throw it away and love me!

CAMILLA. Yes, that is what I longed for.

NIKOLAUS. It's so easy! A word—a piece of paper—divorce. . . .

CAMILLA. Oh—a piece of paper.

NIKOLAUS. If there's nothing between us but a piece of paper to be signed—

CAMILLA. So that everything may be quite in order . . .

NIKOLAUS. Believe me there is nothing in the world I am afraid of—if you are mine. What could I fear?

CAMILLA. . . . Well-ordered and comfortable. A pretty rose and gold bedroom. Quiet. Security. Under the snowy pillow the document that divorced me and makes me your wife. Locked doors—curtained windows—and outside the whole world, watching and protecting legitimate joys of married love. . . .

NIKOLAUS. It would be Paradise . . . and if we had a child . . .

CAMILLA. Quiet and comfort. . . .

NIKOLAUS [*quickly*]. But if that isn't what you want—if you seek danger, romance—I'll come to you, on the estate. And if a hundred men are set to watch you—I'll climb by night to your window—Let them beat me down—shoot me—I'm not afraid of anything. . . . Or you can come to me—wherever you want—If it's sin, excitement, danger you wish . . . an apartment, an apartment where I can wait for you—always hungering for you . . . a little apartment. . . .

CAMILLA [*with irony*]. A little apartment . . .

NIKOLAUS. On a side street . . .

CAMILLA. Where no one will see me . . .

NIKOLAUS. A warm, cozy little room. . . .

CAMILLA [*triumphant, but wearily. Kicks stool aside*]. Again! I was right!

NIKOLAUS. But you said yourself . . .

CAMILLA. So much has had to happen to have you stop where you were ashamed to begin—you all want the same—all you cavaliers in dress suits—a nice little apartment on a side street. Through the twilight—with a heavy veil over my face. While you spray yourself with Eau de Cologne. A cozy boudoir, flowers on the landing—camellias strewn on the bed—a safe little adventure. [*Crosses back of NIKOLAUS to up right center. SECOND COATROOM WOMAN enters with CAMILLA's cloak—comes slowly up to her.*] Put it down there.

SECOND WOMAN. Yes, madame.

[*Puts it down. Exits left entrance.*]

CAMILLA [*crosses down between two chairs, sighing*]. A safe little adventure!

NIKOLAUS. Camilla!

CAMILLA. You were afraid. You failed me.

NIKOLAUS. No! No!

CAMILLA. You are a man of honor!

NIKOLAUS. You say that as if it were a reproach. What are you doing with me? Why do you torture me? Try me. . . . You know I'll go with you—anywhere you want. [*Horried.*] Why did you force me to speak? Let me say things that

were not true? Camilla! You know that whatever you want . . .

CAMILLA. Now you're afraid to stay behind.

NIKOLAUS. I'll go with you—anywhere. . . .

CAMILLA. The only one I have ever loved—no one else—never—only you.

NIKOLAUS. Let us not lose a minute. [*Seizes CAMILLA's cloak.*] Let us go now!

[*Crosses to CAMILLA, starts to put on her cloak.*]

CAMILLA. Put it down. Don't . . . I want to get my breath.

NIKOLAUS. Quick—let's leave!

CAMILLA. Yes, in a minute.

NIKOLAUS. I'll go for my coat—I'll be back in a second.

[*He puts cloak on bench up right.*]

CAMILLA. Won't it be too late?

NIKOLAUS. Too late, what do you mean?

CAMILLA. When you come back.

NIKOLAUS. Then I'll go as I am. Come, quickly!

CAMILLA. Get your coat.

NIKOLAUS. I don't need it.

CAMILLA. You can't go out with me like that—without a hat—it would be—noticed. [*Sits down again.*] Go—get your hat and coat.

[*Sits right.*]

NIKOLAUS. Only a minute.

[*Exits left. Short pause.*]

LISKA [*entering right entrance*]. I knew you were alone.

CAMILLA [*significantly*]. Yes—I am alone.

LISKA. That's why I came.

CAMILLA. If you had known I was alone you wouldn't have come. Oh, but that doesn't matter now.

LISKA. But, Camilla. . . .

CAMILLA. Come here.

LISKA. Oh!

CAMILLA [*kindly*]. Sit down here beside me.

LISKA. You—you never said that to me before.

CAMILLA. What?

LISKA. Asked me to sit down by you.

CAMILLA. Sit down. [*LISKA sits back of CAMILLA right.*] A little while ago—upstairs—you begged me for something.

LISKA. Yes.

CAMILLA. Do you still remember what it was?

LISKA. Yes, Camilla.

CAMILLA. You wanted me to give you—some one.

LISKA. Yes.

CAMILLA [*very calmly*]. I give him to you.

LISKA. Nikolaus!!

CAMILLA. I give him to you.

LISKA [*frightened, as if she didn't understand*]. I begged you to say one word to him. . . .

CAMILLA. I know—I remember.

LISKA. Well—?

CAMILLA. He is yours.

[*Pause.*]

LISKA. Dear God—has something happened?

CAMILLA. No—nothing. I simply regret that I was cruel to you.

LISKA. And he—does he know?

CAMILLA. He will learn now.

LISKA. But—you won't tell him, will you, that I begged you—

CAMILLA. No fear.

LISKA. And he must not learn that I know of it. . . . If he does he will despise me. He must not suspect.

So it's agreed, I know nothing of it?

CAMILLA. Yes.

LISKA. And he—doesn't know yet?

CAMILLA [*puts hand on LISKA*]. He suspects it already. . . . But I am telling you because early this morning the hour will strike when he will at last be alone, entirely alone—and will need comforting. In the first pangs of his grief he will grasp at any solace. Be near him then—be clever. You must be the first woman he sees when he looks around him—be with him so that he will not go to bad women.

LISKA. Oh—how pitiful my happiness is. But—I thank you. [*Takes CAMILLA's hand with both of hers.*] You see—what a beggar I am.

CAMILLA. I am the beggar, Liska.

LISKA. You? The glorious queen, who can bestow such gifts?

[*Short pause.*]

CAMILLA [*rises*]. Go now, Liska, he will be here soon. And if he sees you—in this last minute . . .

LISKA [*crosses left center*]. I'll go.

CAMILLA [*crosses to center*]. And don't leave him. He must go with you, and your brother. Don't leave him alone—on the street—anything but that.

LISKA. No, I won't. I'll go now.

[*Exits left entrance. Short pause.*]

CAMILLA *crosses up center, then down left center. She looks at the diamond in her hand. The COMMISSIONER and the SECRETARY cross the stage, from the right entrance to the left. Short pause.*

NIKOLAUS [*enters left with his cloak and hat in his hand*]. Here I am. [*Takes CAMILLA's cloak, crosses back of CAMILLA.*] Come, let us go!

CAMILLA [*sitting*]. How small you are.

NIKOLAUS. Why—why do you say that to me?

CAMILLA. From up here—where I'm floating—you all look so tiny—like ants. You are left behind—I see you crawling about—in the swarming multitudes—so very tiny. . . .

NIKOLAUS. Camilla!

CAMILLA. You are wise—you are an enemy.

NIKOLAUS. Camilla!

CAMILLA. A strong, stupid man—how wonderful that would have been!

NIKOLAUS. I am yours—I am your slave!

CAMILLA. You are wise—you are small.

NIKOLAUS. My life . . .

CAMILLA [*with the stone in her hand*]. I don't need it any more.

NIKOLAUS. What are you doing? In God's name—some one will see you.

CAMILLA [*looking at the stone*]. My beautiful, sea-green diamond.

NIKOLAUS. They'll see you—be careful!

CAMILLA. Once more I look into its eyes—deep into its eyes.

NIKOLAUS. What are you going to do? [*Horried.*] You wouldn't—

CAMILLA [*holds the stone high in the air and looks at it passionately*]. And it looks at me too.

[*Suddenly she lets her hand fall.*]

Then, quite calmly she crosses right and tosses the stone to the right. It rolls off stage.

NIKOLAUS. What have you done?

[*Drops her cloak onto the chair.*]

CAMILLA [*looks at NIKOLAUS, then goes out to the left. Speaks off*]. Oh—please . . .

COMMISSIONER [*appears from the left*]. You called me, madame?

CAMILLA. Yes.

COMMISSIONER. What can I do?

[*The SECRETARY appears from the left. Takes a few steps in and stands watching curiously.*]

CAMILLA [*leading the COMMISSIONER to the right*]. Look—do you see something shining there? Could that be what you gentlemen are looking for?

[*Points off.*]

COMMISSIONER. Where?

CAMILLA. There in the corner—near the curtain. I wouldn't—go near it—or touch it for anything in the world. [COMMISSIONER *crosses right.*] In case it really is . . .

COMMISSIONER [*hurries to the right, bends over, and picks up the stone*]. The diamond!

[SECRETARY *runs up to the COMMISSIONER.*]

CAMILLA. Is that it?

COMMISSIONER. Yes—it is. [*Excitedly. To the SECRETARY.*] Too bad you weren't here when I found it. . . .

SECRETARY. I *was here* when madame . . .

COMMISSIONER [*crosses to center. Very excitedly*]. Madame, for such good fortune . . . I thank you. It will give me the . . . the greatest pleasure . . . to use what little influence I have . . . with the government . . . may I ask . . . will you tell me your name? . . .

[*Czardas heard off.*]

CAMILLA. There is no need of that—I did not even touch it.

COMMISSIONER [*joyfully*]. Madame does not wish to have her *name* mentioned?

CAMILLA. No.

COMMISSIONER. Madame, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you.

[*Runs off right, followed by the SECRETARY. Pause. During this pause a little party, homeward bound, crosses the platform. A girl in the party notices NIKOLAUS and cries out to him.*]

THE GIRL. Hey—Kornady!

[*Throws a great bunch of flowers at his feet and then exits, laughing.*]

CAMILLA. You can take your coat off again.

NIKOLAUS. What have you done?

CAMILLA. I have thrown it back into the sea.

NIKOLAUS. This—this is the end of me.

CAMILLA [*stands, indicating the music*]. Why are they still playing? My *carnival is over*.

OROSZY [*enters right upper entrance*]. The game has broken up.

CAMILLA. Shall we go?

OROSZY. If you wish.

[*Stares at NIKOLAUS.*]

CAMILLA. Did you keep on winning?

OROSZY. No. I gave everything back to them—threw it away. [*To NIKOLAUS.*] We waited for you.

NIKOLAUS. I could not come.

OROSZY. Just as well for you that you didn't. You would have lost.

NIKOLAUS. Perhaps.

OROSZY. Or did you win—because you didn't play?

[*Short pause.*]

NIKOLAUS. Is that to be taken as a challenge?

OROSZY. It is.

NIKOLAUS. I am at your service.

OROSZY. I trust so.

CAMILLA [*quickly*]. Nikolaus, go, they're waiting for you—and, please—[*To OROSZY.*—consider me now. [*Crosses to NIKOLAUS.*]. Go, Matyas and Liska asked me to send you up to them.

NIKOLAUS. I . . .

CAMILLA. Go at once!

NIKOLAUS [*to OROSZY*]. You know where you can find me.

[*Bows and exits left. OROSZY takes a step toward CAMILLA.*]

CAMILLA [*pause*]. Another minute and you would have made yourself *ridiculous* . . . done a real injustice. . . . You believed that he . . .

OROSZY. Is in love with you.

CAMILLA. You've known that for two years.

[*The czardas wilder.*]

OROSZY. To-night you have acted—

CAMILLA. Don't say anything you will regret—for you know nothing yet.

OROSZY. What! What don't I know?

CAMILLA. I watched you all evening.

OROSZY. And I watched you.

CAMILLA. I know—I have gone about as if I were in a dream—my eyes burning—my cheeks flushed—my voice trembling. You saw all that—but you didn't understand.

OROSZY. I didn't understand?

CAMILLA. No.

OROSZY. I didn't understand?

CAMILLA. You thought this little law student . . .

OROSZY. Little law student . . .

CAMILLA. I am grateful to him—he stayed at my side through it all—the poor boy—like a faithful little dog.

OROSZY. In God's name what *have* you done?

CAMILLA. Sandor, I found the diamond that the Princess lost.

OROSZY. !!!

CAMILLA. But the police already have it.

OROSZY. Already? What do you mean by that?

CAMILLA. Don't interrupt me. I'll tell you everything. Before supper—on the floor—by the curtain—I found the stone.

OROSZY. And you didn't give it back?

CAMILLA. I threw it away—and showed them where it was—they picked it up. Everything is all right.

OROSZY. And during supper—did you have it then?

CAMILLA. Yes.

OROSZY. So that is why . . .

CAMILLA. That is why—that is why I acted as I did—it was not love.

OROSZY. And you let them go on searching respectable people, undressing ladies . . .

CAMILLA. Don't waste your pity on them—they were probably very glad of the opportunity of showing their expensive lingerie. I am the only one you should pity.

OROSZY [*already calmer*]. Always—always some madness or other.

CAMILLA. And poor Nikolaus! I forced him to stay with me. He never even suspected what was the matter.

OROSZY. I ought to be horrified—You're so difficult—but—[*Crosses to*

CAMILLA. *He sighs deeply.*—dear God—I am so happy! [*Kisses her hands.*] You, dear, pure . . . forgive an old man in love. . . .

CAMILLA. Old?

OROSZY [*taking in his breath*].
Oh . . . [*Closes his eyes.*] That was
the worst hour of my life!

CAMILLA. And you are not angry?

OROSZY. If—only you're not angry.

CAMILLA. And you really be-
lieved . . .

OROSZY. Because I love you so
very dearly. . . .

CAMILLA. And I—you.

OROSZY [*bends over her hand*].
My beautiful—child.

CAMILLA. You—only you.

COMMISSIONER [*enters right*]. For-
give me, madame.

CAMILLA [*introducing*]. My hus-
band—the Commissioner of Police.

[*Crosses left.*]

COMMISSIONER. Stoff.

OROSZY. Oroszy.

COMMISSIONER. Madame was so
fortunate!

OROSZY [*with feigned joviality*].
Yes, I know.

COMMISSIONER. And was so
kind. . . .

OROSZY. Yes, I have heard.

[*The czardas becomes even
more wild. CAMILLA, stand-
ing to one side, listens with her
head thrown back. She seems
to be saying good-bye to the
music forever. Then she lets
her head fall.*]

COMMISSIONER. I at once dispatched
a mounted courier to His Excellency
the Governor announcing that the
Crown Diamond has been found.
His Excellency was so kind as to in-
quire into the details of the finding.
Your gracious wife begged me not to
mention her name—so I took the lib-
erty—in view of this request—of re-
porting that I—had found it. [*To*

CAMILLA *quickly*.] Is that what you
wished, madame?

CAMILLA. Yes.

COMMISSIONER. If I interrupted you
now it was only in order to assure
myself that your wishes had been ob-
served.

CAMILLA. Yes.

COMMISSIONER. And in case the
gentlemen of the press . . .

OROSZY [*arm in CAMILLA's*]. My
wife has had nothing whatsoever to
do with the affair. Having seen the
stone it was naturally her duty to in-
form the police. But she does not
wish to be connected with the scandal
in any way—not even as the honest
finder of the stone.

COMMISSIONER. An admirable point
of view.

OROSZY. As for the gentlemen of
the press, if you tell them nothing—

COMMISSIONER. Certainly not. God
forbid!

OROSZY. They will learn nothing
from us.

COMMISSIONER. A highly admirable
point of view. Your servant . . .

[OROSZY *up to left*. COMMIS-
SIONER *bows and exits right*.]

NIKOLAUS [*appears on the landing*.
Calls, with his back to the audience].
Porter! A cab!

DOORMAN [*off right entrance*].
Yes, Your Excellency!

[*Calling.*]

OROSZY. Nikolaus!

DOORMAN. Caaaaab!

OROSZY [*as NIKOLAUS comes
down*]. Nikolaus . . . just now I
was mistaken.

[*Stretches out his hand.*]

NIKOLAUS. Oh!

[*They shake hands.*]

OROSZY. Are you coming with
us?

NIKOLAUS. I am sorry—I have already promised to go with Matyas and Liska.

[*Crosses down left. CAPTAIN appears from right entrance.*]

OROSZY. Have you heard the news?

CAPTAIN. No. What is it?

OROSZY. They've found the diamond.

CAPTAIN. Who had it?

OROSZY. No one had it. It was lying on the floor. [*Calling.*] Here, my coat.

FIRST COATROOM WOMAN [*enters from left entrance and takes his check*]. At once, Baron.

[*Exits.*]

OROSZY. We're all Barons before the tip.

[*Goes and listens to the music.*]

CAPTAIN [*crosses to right of CAMILLA. Comes and stands near her. Drawing on white gloves.*]. A long time since there's been such a successful ball in Hungary. They'll be dancing till noon. [*CAMILLA does not answer. There is a short pause.*] At first the excitement over the diamond disturbed things—but it was soon forgotten. [*CAMILLA does not answer. A short pause. Makes a last attempt.*] They say it's no longer cold outside. The air is quite warm. [*Short pause.*] It's snowing.

[*Short pause. The czardas rages now. Women's laughter rises above the music. The CAPTAIN slowly walks off left.*]

OROSZY. They are still dancing, Camilla. [*Looks at CAMILLA.*] Would you care to? . . .

CAMILLA. To go home. . . .

[*OEZ, LISKA, already with wraps on, appear at left upper en-*

trance. They only see NIKOLAUS.]

OEZ. Did you get a cab?

NIKOLAUS. They're calling one.

OROSZY [*to NIKOLAUS*]. You're going with them?

NIKOLAUS. I promised to.

OEZ [*coming down*]. We're going to the Stefan for breakfast. Come with us?

[*OROSZY looks at CAMILLA. CAMILLA shakes her head.*]

OROSZY. My wife is tired. We're going home.

OEZ. Good-bye. [*Starts to go; then comes back.*] Ah, of course—You're leaving town to-morrow?

OROSZY. To-day, my boy, to-day. [*He points to the window.*] To-morrow is here.

OEZ [*crosses to him, goes to CAMILLA*]. We won't see you again for a year? [*Kisses her hand. CAMILLA does not move. Crosses to OROSZY.*] Good-bye.

[*He shakes hands with OROSZY and he goes out.*]

LISKA. Come on!

OEZ. Are you in a hurry again?

[*Goes out with LISKA. The CAPTAIN comes down the stairs, in cape and csako, and goes out.*]

LISKA [*at the door*]. Nikolaus!

NIKOLAUS. Good night.

[*Bows to CAMILLA, who does not notice him.*]

OROSZY [*to his wife*]. Nikolaus is saying good night to you, my dear.

[*CAMILLA nods to NIKOLAUS.*]

NIKOLAUS. Good-bye.

OROSZY. Good night.

NIKOLAUS. I'm coming.

[*Exits to right. Business of COATROOM WOMEN helping*

OROSZY and CAMILLA *into their coats.*]

FIRST WOMAN. She found the diamond.

SECOND WOMAN. How pale she is!

FIRST WOMAN. Her eyes are closed.

SECOND WOMAN. [*as CAMILLA turns to left*]. How white she is . . . like a dead woman!

PORTER. *CAB!*

CURTAIN

FASHIONS FOR MEN

Translated by
BENJAMIN GLAZER

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CHARACTERS

PETER JUHASZ
ADELE, *his wife*
PAULA
OSCAR
PHILIP
THE COUNT
MATE
DOMOKOS
SANTHA
ADOLF
A DELIVERY BOY
A CABMAN
THE ARISTOCRATIC LADY
THE UNASSUMING LADY
THE INSIGNIFICANT LADY
THE DISSATISFIED LADY
THE PATIENT LADY
THE THOROUGH YOUNG LADY
THE YOUNG GENTLEMAN
THE OLD GENTLEMAN
THE NERVOUS GENTLEMAN

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ACT ONE

[SCENE: *A little shop. Down left is the display window; up left the entrance from the street; between the two a cashier's desk with a cash register upon it. There is a counter along the back wall and another along the right wall with shelves be-*

hind them and, over them, a little balcony.

A broad space between the counters leads through an archway up right to a rear room of the establishment. Before the window down left stands a table, displaying open boxes

of cravats, suspenders, ladies' girdles, colored scarfs and bottles of perfume. Near it stands a rack of walking-sticks. There are two stools in front of each counter.

It is evening. ADELE sits behind the cashier's desk. OSCAR stands behind the counter at back speaking in low tones to the UNASSUMING LADY, who sits on a stool facing him across a heap of merchandise on the counter. JUHASZ stands in front of the counter at right, waiting on the ARISTOCRATIC LADY, who sits on one of the stools with an assortment of summer-weight material for blouses before her.]

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. If I remember rightly, Mr. Juhasz, I saw some of this on Countess Hohensperg at Tatralomnicz.

JUHASZ. That may be. I must look it up in the book. [*To ADELE.*] Tell me, dear. [*Shows her the material.*] Is this the same Agreeable we sold to the Countess Hohensperg a few months ago?

ADELE. It may be. I am not sure.

OSCAR [*to the UNASSUMING LADY*]. Excuse me, madame. [*Loudly to JUHASZ.*] Yes, the Countess Hohensperg got some of that. . . .

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. I thought so.

OSCAR. Yes, madame, this Chaterton Agreeable comes in twelve different colors. The countess took five.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Then, of course, I can't consider it. I am really sorry to give you so much trouble, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. But it is no trouble at all.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. You are perfectly charming, Mr. Juhasz. Just as if you had been born to cater to the

caprices of women. You never lose patience—

JUHASZ [*clearing away the materials*]. But that's what we are here for, madame.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*rummaging through the materials*]. This is nice, but it isn't becoming to me. This is for a bigger woman . . . this for a thinner woman . . . this is too youthful . . . and this is too old. This is nice, but it's a bit loud . . . and this is too dull. Now this is very nice indeed, but Countess Hohensperg has it. So it is out of the question.

JUHASZ. Suppose we let the Agreeable go, and look at some Biarritz instead. The fact is, I consider Biarritz a much better grade. It is kept back here. Will you step this way, or shall I bring it out to you here?

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*rises*]. I wouldn't think of putting you to so much trouble. You have turned out half your stock for me already. [*Turns to ADELE.*] Your wife must be impatient to go home.

ADELE. Not at all.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. It's past seven. You are usually closed by this time.

ADELE. Oh, we are very glad to serve you. [*Points to OSCAR.*] There, you see . . . and there is still another customer in there.

OSCAR [*has approached JUHASZ*]. The lady heard us mention the Agreeable that Countess Hohensperg—

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Quite out of the question!

OSCAR. No, no. [*Low.*] The lady heard us talking about it [*Mean-time JUHASZ has gone over to the UNASSUMING LADY.*] and wants to have a look at it. [*Takes the material with a pitying smile.*] Thank you. She's from a different social sphere.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. One would never believe that people could be such apes.

JUHASZ [*in the archway*]. If you will step this way, please.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. I shan't detain him much longer, Mrs. Juhasz.

[JUHASZ *lets her pass him, then follows her off through the archway.*]

UNASSUMING LADY. I'll take this for the sixth.

OSCAR [*counting the patterns*]. One, two, three, four, five and the Agreeable makes six.

UNASSUMING LADY. Will it take long?

OSCAR. No, indeed, madame. We know that madame goes to Lelle on the twentieth, and from there to Lake Pusztaban, and later to Post Beretty—Saint Peter. [*The UNASSUMING LADY rises.*] Is there anything else I can show you? We have just got in some very beautiful girdles.

[*Reaches for a box on the table.*]

UNASSUMING LADY. Thank you, but it's too late now.

OSCAR. But, madame, that's what we are here for. [*Shows her a bonnet.*] Auto bonnets . . . just arrived . . . really the newest thing of its kind.

UNASSUMING LADY [*takes it in her hand*]. I shall be coming in again toward the end of next week. . . . How much is this?

OSCAR. May I see? [*Looks at the tag.*] Seventy kronen.

UNASSUMING LADY. For this?

OSCAR. It's the style that costs, madame. We have some cheaper ones . . . some between forty and fifty.

UNASSUMING LADY. Thanks. . . .

Next time I come, perhaps. You have my address?

OSCAR [*rapidly*]. Forty Nagykorona Street, first floor, apartment two.

UNASSUMING LADY. That's right. Now please see to it that my things are delivered on time. Good night.

OSCAR [*opens the door for her*]. You can rely on us absolutely. Thank you. Good night. [*She exits. He closes the door behind her and returns to his counter. As he speaks he clears away the materials, folds up those he sold and makes notes on the tags.*] A couple of evening stars . . . those two . . . always popping up just as we are about to close . . . and it's almost impossible to get rid of them.

ADELE. Philip is still busy with a customer, too.

OSCAR [*glances through the archway*]. And your husband is just starting to climb the ladder. [*Looks at his watch.*] This is a nice time. [*ADELE takes her hat out of the lowest drawer of the desk.*] What are you doing?

ADELE. Getting my hat.

OSCAR [*excitedly*]. But, my dear, where do you expect to talk to him?

ADELE. Now don't get excited. . . . And I told you before you are not to call me dear in the shop.

OSCAR [*with a glance through the archway*]. He can't hear me. He's up on the ladder. And no matter if he does hear me to-day. You are not going home with him, are you?

ADELE. No; I'm only getting my hat.

OSCAR. You settle everything with him right here . . . in the shop.

ADELE. All right! All right!

[*Takes off her hat.*]

OSCAR [*excitedly*]. I won't have you go home with him any more.

ADELE. Don't get so excited. I'll talk to him right here. But I have to wait until the customers are gone, haven't I?

OSCAR. Yes, certainly. [*Nervously resumes his task of clearing the counter.*] Forgive me, dear, but I'm awfully nervous. And no wonder.

ADELE. I'm nervous, too. But I control myself.

OSCAR. I'll be right near you, and if you need me I'll come over. The main thing is to keep cool. Now, of all times, you must be cool.

ADELE. Leave everything to me. If I need you I'll call you in.

OSCAR. That's right! That's right! There's only one thing I want to impress upon you. No scandal.

ADELE. He'd never make a scandal.

OSCAR. And you have no business going to his house after this. When you leave here to-day there is only one place for you to go: your mother's house.

ADELE. Now, dear, you're getting excited again.

OSCAR. How can you expect me to be calm? I stand at the turning point of my life. And I'm subject to heart attacks. It runs in our family. I have to be very careful. . . . And yet, my God. . . . [*Stops his work.*] when I think that to-night . . . this ordinary spring night . . . this commonplace Thursday evening . . . you are to be mine . . . definitely and forever . . . mine . . . body and soul. . . . Come here!

ADELE. Be careful.

OSCAR. Come here, come here!

ADELE [*goes to him*]. There now, you are getting all excited again.

OSCAR. Only your hand, your hand . . . for a moment.

ADELE. But Oscar!

OSCAR. Your hand! You know I've got heart trouble. [*She gives him her hand. He takes it, looks cautiously through the archway, then speaks, softly but passionately.*] Mine! My own wife! Before all the world! And together we begin a new and wonderful life. To-night I lead you forth from your prison. . . . Don't take your hand away! I won't have you take your hand away!

ADELE [*leaves him; returns to her desk*]. You must behave yourself, Oscar, or you'll make me nervous, too.

OSCAR. Your hand, your hand, your mouth. . . .

ADELE. But, Oscar! . . . You know I need all my wits just now. Clear away that Zephyr.

OSCAR. Clear away, clear away! Now, when I want to explode, I must clear a lot of Zephyr away! [*Gazes at her adoringly.*] When I think, you sweet, slender, white . . . [*He looks quickly toward the archway, as if he heard something there. His voice changes suddenly.*] Forty Nagyköröna Street, apartment two. [*He writes on a tag.*] First floor. Madame Aurel Szelenyi.

[*PHILIP and the YOUNG GENTLEMAN enter through the archway.*]

PHILIP. This way, Baron.

[*Comes in before him.*]

YOUNG GENTLEMAN. Can you still send it to-day?

PHILIP [*at the cashier's desk*]. If you must have it, sir.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN [*at the cashier's desk*]. As soon as you can, please.

PHILIP [*to ADELE*]. Three hundred and eighty-eight kronen.

[*The YOUNG GENTLEMAN gives her a bank note.*]

ADELE [*rings the cash register, makes change*]. Three hundred and eighty-eight . . . twelve . . . makes four hundred. Thank you, sir.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN. You have the address?

OSCAR [*in a sing-song tone*]. Thirty-two Museum Street, second floor.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN [*staring in surprise at OSCAR*]. That's right. Good day.

OSCAR [*hurries to open the door for him*]. Good night, sir.

YOUNG GENTLEMAN. Good night.

[*He exits, pauses a moment outside the window, then passes on.*]

PHILIP. Thank you, sir. Good night.

[*A brief pause.*]

OSCAR. Now if that pest of a woman would only go. . . . [*To PHILIP.*] Philip, clear those rags away, will you?

[*He points to the materials on the counter at right.* PHILIP obeys.]

ADELE. Didn't I hear Philip say he had a ticket for "Lohengrin" to-night?

OSCAR [*as he goes up toward the archway*]. For what?

ADELE. For the opera.

PHILIP [*already working at the counter*]. That makes no difference.

OSCAR. It doesn't begin till seven-thirty.

[*He exits through the archway. There is a brief pause.*]

PHILIP. It begins at seven, but it doesn't matter.

ADELE. Leave that stuff, Philip, and run along to your opera.

PHILIP. Oh, it's all the same to me now. I've been to "Lohengrin" sixteen times and was late every time. To-night I'll be late for the seventeenth time.

ADELE. Leave that, then, and go, why don't you?

PHILIP. Oh, I might as well be an hour late now. I know all of "Lohengrin" by heart. The only reason I accept tickets for it any more is because I've never succeeded in seeing the beginning. The part where the swan comes on the stage, pulling Lohengrin in a boat. I'd like to see that just once. But it's too late now. The swan's all through by this time, and has gone home for his supper.

[*Continues to fold and put away the materials.*]

ADELE. My husband will clear that away. Don't be so obstinate.

PHILIP. You seem very eager to get rid of me to-night.

ADELE. I don't know what makes you think that.

PHILIP. Just things I've noticed.

ADELE. What have you noticed?

PHILIP. Maybe I better keep my mouth shut.

ADELE. That's always a good idea. And yet, as long as you mentioned it—

PHILIP. Please, please. . . . I don't want to know. Just leave me out of it.

ADELE. Out of what?

PHILIP. Out of what's going on around here. I'm just a lonesome old man—

ADELE. You are a hateful old man. [*Wrathfully.*] You hate Oscar because he is the heart and soul of the business, because he is young, and clever, and has nice manners, and knows the business better than you do, and because the customers like him better. You are jealous of him.

PHILIP. I consider Mr. Oscar a very ordinary young man.

ADELE. And I admire his type very much!

PHILIP. His kind must live, too, I suppose.

[JUHASZ *and the* ARISTOCRATIC LADY *enter through the archway.*]

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. No, your Biarritz won't do. I wonder you keep that grade of material at all.

JUHASZ. Perhaps madame will be good enough to come in again next week. We are expecting an entirely new lot from Vienna. We are certain to find something you like.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*goes to the cashier's desk*]. Your patience is endless, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Patience is a merchant's first duty.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. You are an angel. A perfect angel! [*To ADELE.*] I hope you don't mind my paying your husband compliments.

ADELE. Indeed, no.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. I daresay you are used to it. Everybody adores Mr. Juhasz.

ADELE. Oh, madame!

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. You are a very fortunate young woman to have such a husband.

JUHASZ. It's I who am fortunate, madame, to have such a devoted little wife. The poor darling sits here

every day from early morning till late at night.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Has the count been here lately?

ADELE. Our benefactor?

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. The guardian angel of the establishment.

JUHASZ. He was here the day before yesterday.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. How is he?

ADELE. In love with my husband.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. You mustn't joke about that, young lady. Everybody loves your husband but his heart is for you alone. Good night, Mr. Angel. . . . I shall look at that Biarritz again in the daylight and that . . . what do you call it . . . too.

PHILIP [*angry, but sweetly*]. Agreeable.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Agreeable. Well, good night.

ADELE *and* JUHASZ [*simultaneously*]. Good night.

[*The ARISTOCRATIC LADY exits.*]

JUHASZ [*closing the door*]. Why didn't you say good night, Philip?

PHILIP [*resentfully*]. Good night, madame.

JUHASZ. Well, well. [*To ADELE.*] What a handsome woman she is!

PHILIP. She's been handsome a long time now. And she owes more than she's worth. You are the only merchant in town who gives her credit any more. You just let her haul the stuff out of here as if it didn't cost you anything.

JUHASZ. What can she do, poor woman? She's got to keep up her social position.

PHILIP. But not with your money.

JUHASZ. Aristocratic poverty is the

bitterest kind. I haven't the heart to refuse her.

ADELE. Philip is in a temper because he has missed the swan again.

JUHASZ [*looks at his watch*]. Did you have a ticket for "Lohengrin" again?

PHILIP. Yes, and I've still got it.

JUHASZ. Why didn't you tell me? You know I'd have let you off at six-thirty. That really makes me angry. I told you long ago—

PHILIP. Because you're good-hearted there's no need for me to—

JUHASZ. There goes my heart again. You all talk about my heart as if it were some *prima donna*. . . . You leave my heart alone.

PHILIP [*mocking the ARISTOCRATIC LADY'S tone*]. Everybody adores Mr. Juhasz!

JUHASZ. Go on now. What are you waiting for?

PHILIP. Thanks, but I shan't go at all to-night.

[*He exits through the archway. There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ. What's wrong with him to-night?

ADELE. I don't know, and I really don't care.

JUHASZ. Why, Adele!

ADELE [*comes out from behind the desk*]. Don't be angry, Peter. I am a bit upset to-night. I've come to a very important decision . . . and I feel . . . I must tell you about it to-day.

JUHASZ. My dear child . . . I didn't think you had a care in the world.

ADELE. Yes, I have. . . . But you are so good . . . so much better than any one else. . . . I hardly know how to begin. It's terribly hard to tell you!

JUHASZ. Hard? To tell me? There, put on your things . . . and you can tell me all about it on the way home. Or while we are at supper.

ADELE. No, Peter, I can't tell you on the way home . . . or at supper either. This is something I must tell you here.

JUHASZ. Here and nowhere else?

ADELE. Here . . . and now.

JUHASZ. Urgent as all that! [*Calls through the archway.*] Adolf, we'll close up now.

ADELE. You will understand . . . when I've told you . . . that—

[*PAULA enters through the archway, a sheaf of letters and invoices in her hand.*]

PAULA. May I interrupt a moment, Mrs. Juhasz?

ADELE. Certainly.

PAULA. Semlinger and Weiss have written about those motor robes again . . . the leather-bound ones. They say they are holding two dozen for us.

ADELE [*uneasily*]. Let me see.

[*She takes the letter.*]

JUHASZ. Didn't you answer them last week?

PAULA. Mrs. Juhasz thought we might wait awhile.

ADELE. How dare you say such a thing?

JUHASZ. But, my dear . . .

PAULA [*coldly*]. Mrs. Juhasz instructed me not to answer it.

JUHASZ. If Miss Paula says you . . .

ADELE. I suppose she *can't* be mistaken.

PAULA. I usually am not.

ADELE. What do I care about your old motor robes? [*Throws the letter away.*] I have nothing to do with it.

[*Walks away from them.*]

JUHASZ [*picks up the letter*]. My wife's a bit nervous to-night. Write Semlinger and Weiss, Miss Paula, that we'll take the whole two dozen. [*Gives her the letter; looks at his watch.*] But do it in the morning. Go home now. To-morrow is another day.

PAULA. Thanks, Mr. Juhasz, but I don't like to go home while there is work unfinished.

JUHASZ. Miss Paula, I've warned you before . . . you'll ruin your eyes if you are not careful.

PAULA. No fear, Mr. Juhasz. . . . There was something about waterproof coats, too, in their first letter. I must look it up.

[*She exits through the archway.*]

JUHASZ. How thorough she is, how orderly!

ADELE. That's what she's paid for. You only see the good side of people.

JUHASZ. I think that must be the only side they show me. [ADOLF enters through the archway, carrying a long pole with a hook on the end of it.] Close up, Adolf; close up. It's half past seven. [ADOLF goes to the door.] Sit down a moment, Adele. [To ADOLF.] Pull it down. We'll go out the back way. [To ADELE.] You are a bit agitated.

[ADOLF has gone outside. First he closes the bronze shutter at the window, then he begins to pull down the iron grating at the door. When it is halfway down he is interrupted.]

COUNT [*outside*]. Ho, there! Wait a minute!

[*He dodges under the half closed grating and enters.*]

JUHASZ [*joyfully*]. The count! Good evening, excellency.

COUNT. Good evening! Good evening!

ADELE [*bowing low*]. Good evening, your excellency.

[*Simultaneously.*]

COUNT. Tell me, do you lock all your customers out like this?

JUHASZ. If we had known, your excellency. [To ADOLF.] Raise it up.

[ADOLF raises the grating and exits through the archway.]

COUNT. I've come to see about those jockey costumes, Juhasz.

JUHASZ. But they were to be sent by post to-morrow.

COUNT. I know, Juhasz, but I'm driving down to the farm to-night . . . and I want to take one costume with me . . . to show to my brother-in-law before the Vienna races.

JUHASZ. The suits are finished, but I'll have to telephone the cap-maker about the caps. Just a moment.

[*He hurries off through the archway.*]

ADELE. Won't you sit down, your excellency?

COUNT. Thanks. I'm going in a moment. What's new?

ADELE. Nothing . . . much, your excellency.

COUNT. How's business?

ADELE. Well . . .

COUNT. What? Not good?

ADELE. Not as good as it might be. . . . Your excellency has been so generous to us. . . . I feel I ought to tell you frankly . . . it's quite bad.

COUNT. Why?

ADELE. There is no accounting for it. For two years business was

splendid, and now, in the third year, it suddenly stopped. It just won't go.

COUNT. But my whole family deals here . . . and all my friends . . . and all my acquaintances.

ADELE. Oh, yes, your excellency. We have you to thank for everything. Not only for setting us up in business, but for getting us most of our customers.

COUNT. I trust that Juhasz isn't going into debt. [*She nods in the affirmative.*] I daresay he gives his neckties away for nothing. That's why you are losing money.

ADELE. He'd give the whole shop away, if it were left to him.

COUNT. He had the same weakness when he worked for me. Anybody could get anything out of him.

ADELE. It's largely his fault.

COUNT. And what about that young man you praised to me so highly? He was supposed to be a genius. A commercial genius. This . . . what's his name? . . . Oscar . . . wasn't it?

ADELE. Oh, he does all he can, and so do I, but—

COUNT. And that nice Miss Paula . . . she's an industrious girl, what?

ADELE. Your excellency's favorite.

COUNT. I am enchanted with her.

[*PAULA enters through the archway, with letters in her hand.*]

PAULA [*with a low bow*]. Good evening, your excellency.

COUNT. Good evening. I was just talking about you.

PAULA. Very good of you. Excuse me. [*To ADELE.*] I was not mistaken, Mrs. Juhasz. Semlinger and Weiss offered us also twenty waterproof coats. We have never given them an answer.

[*Proffers the letter.*]

ADELE [*impatiently*]. Show it to Mr. Oscar.

PAULA. I did. He referred me to you.

ADELE [*crossly*]. We don't want any waterproof coats.

COUNT. Why not? They are very useful things. They keep the rain out.

ADELE. If your excellency would like to order one—

COUNT. Oh, indeed, no! I can't bear waterproof coats. [*Looks at PAULA.*] Miss Paula is smiling. . . . Doubtless she's fond of waterproof coats.

PAULA. I beg pardon.

COUNT. Why *did* you smile then? Just making fun of the old man?

PAULA. Old man? . . . Oh!

COUNT. Well, not exactly old.

PAULA. I smiled because your excellency has such an aversion for waterproof coats. But I never thought of you as old.

ADELE. You may go, Miss Paula.

[*PAULA bows to the COUNT and exits through the archway.*]

COUNT [*his glance follows her*]. Why are you so severe with that nice young girl?

ADELE. She is a bit forward.

COUNT. Not at all.

ADELE. She is deceitful. I can't bear her. Ordinarily she is very glum and serious, but when your excellency puts your foot in the door she suddenly becomes brisk and cheerful.

COUNT. Really? I am flattered.

JUHASZ [*comes through the archway, carrying a jockey suit of brown silk striped in green*]. I can't get the cap-maker on the wire. Oscar is trying again. But here is the jockey suit.

COUNT [*adjusts his glass*]. Yes, this will do very well. Will you wrap it up for me, Juhasz?

[*Returns the suit to him.*]

OSCAR [*rushes in through the archway, speaks rapidly, officiously*]. Your excellency, good evening! We are in luck, your excellency. The caps are finished; he was going to send them to-morrow, but he can send them at once if your excellency prefers—

COUNT [*stares at him in astonishment; turns to JUHASZ*]. What does he say?

JUHASZ. The caps are ready. If your excellency will tell us where to send them—

COUNT [*staring at OSCAR*]. Eh? Yes . . . wait a moment. [PAULA appears in the archway; he smiles at her.] Yes.

PAULA. Pardon me for interrupting.

OSCAR [*officiously*]. Why don't you come in when his excellency speaks to you?

PAULA [*comes nearer*]. I only wanted to say the cap-maker telephoned again. I told him to send the caps. His man will be here with them in ten minutes.

COUNT. That was clever of you. Thanks very much.

PAULA. Not at all, your excellency.

[*She exits through the archway.*]

COUNT [*his glance has followed her until she vanished*]. Well, then . . . there was something I wanted to say.

JUHASZ. Where you want the cap sent.

COUNT. Yes. Hm! Nowhere. I'm going to the casino . . . my motor will pick me up there. . . .

You keep the cap for me here. I'll stop for it later.

OSCAR [*briskly*]. Just as you say, sir. I'll have it packed up for you at once. Excuse me, excellency.

[*He hurries off through the archway.*]

COUNT [*stares after him in amazement; does not speak until he is gone*]. What an extraordinary fellow!

JUHASZ [*with an apologetic smile*]. He is always in a hurry.

COUNT [*comes affectionately close to JUHASZ*]. Business bad, eh? [JUHASZ looks quickly at ADELE.] Yes, she told me.

ADELE. I didn't think we had any secrets from his—

JUHASZ. From his excellency? No. But I don't like to have you complain—

COUNT. She didn't complain. She only answered my questions.

JUHASZ. Well, there are a few difficulties, but . . . we'll overcome them somehow. We shan't go into bankruptcy.

COUNT. I should hope not.

JUHASZ. We've worked faithfully . . . but one can't expect the sun to shine all the time. There must be cloudy days, too. But they pass.

COUNT [*affectionately*]. I should be offended if my friend Juhasz were in trouble and didn't tell me. Well? You must tell me.

JUHASZ. No real trouble, your excellency. I have my health and a good little wife [*Takes her hand.*] who loves me.

COUNT [*to ADELE, approvingly*]. That's right. Bravo!

JUHASZ. And friends . . . my smart and loyal Oscar. He is the heart and soul of the business.

COUNT. He seems a bit . . . sudden.

JUHASZ. And then there is Paula. She is the policeman of the business. Now, how can I possibly go wrong?

COUNT. Well, my dear Juhasz, I must be off. [*As he shakes hands.*] I can only tell you again what I told you once before, when you were in difficulties. . . . For fifteen years you sat at a desk in my castle at Gerelypuszta. I never had as good a man in my service before or since. It is true you wasted a lot of your time cultivating flowers, and at best you were never very energetic. . . .

JUHASZ. That is something one learns.

COUNT. Never, but that doesn't matter. It is character that counts with me. That desk has been vacant three years now. I want you to know that, whatever happens, that place is open to you as long as Gerelypuszta belongs to me or my family.

JUHASZ. Oh, your excellency!

COUNT. If I only had some one half as honest as you right now! We are beginning to export cheese on a large scale. Mostly to England.

JUHASZ. Puszta cheese?

COUNT. Yes . . . it has been a great success. London is mad about that cheese. And so am I. I took first prize with it in London and in Edinburgh, too. You have no idea how proud that made me.

JUHASZ. I remember your first experiment with that cheese.

COUNT. But you'd never know it now. [*With enthusiasm.*] I succeeded in crossing two breeds: Camembert, that over-ripe beauty, with Roquefort, that sharp, sardonic old gentleman. And the child of that marriage I nurtured and reared with

my own hands. So naturally I am proud of the career it is making for itself. . . . Well, I must be going. Remember, let nothing worry you. If everything else fails you: Gerelypuszta, Desk, Cheese! Good night!

ADELE. Good night, your excellency.

JUHASZ [*opens the door*]. See you later, excellency. . . . [*The COUNT exits. He closes the door.*] You shouldn't have complained to him, dear.

ADELE. I didn't. He asked me.

JUHASZ. I don't want to be put in a false position. He has done more for me already than my own father could have done.

ADELE [*hesitantly*]. Well, now, Peter . . . if you have a moment. . . .

JUHASZ. Certainly, my angel. I'm really curious to know what it is that's agitating this—[*Takes her head in his hands.*]—precious little head. [*Looks into her eyes.*] See here! There are tears in your eyes! It isn't anything serious?

ADELE. Yes, Peter, it is serious . . . very serious.

JUHASZ. Well?

ADELE [*pulls a stool over for him*]. Sit down here, Peter.

JUHASZ. Serious as that?

[*He sits.*]

ADELE. There are two separate things I must talk to you about. And one is harder than the other.

JUHASZ. Let us have the hardest first.

ADELE. If you weren't such a good man, it wouldn't be half as difficult to tell you—

[*She dries her eyes.*]

JUHASZ. There, there, my dear! I am sure you have done nothing you need to cry about.

ADELE. It's on your account I'm crying.

JUHASZ. On my account?

ADELE. Peter . . . [*Dries her eyes; collects herself.*] Those different sums of money . . . you gave me . . . I made you give me . . . these past three years . . . because you are so foolish about money . . . and can't refuse any one who asks you. . . . I told you I was putting the money in a savings bank. . . . Well, so I did. . . . You know it amounts to fifty-one thousand kronen.

JUHASZ. I know.

ADELE. I just found out from Oscar that there had been a meeting of your creditors, and that the lawyer came to see you. . . . You didn't tell me.

JUHASZ. No, dear.

ADELE. You didn't tell me because you were afraid I'd be worried. I know. . . . You offered the creditors this fifty-one thousand kronen on account of their claims if they would refrain from forcing you into bankruptcy . . . and they accepted because they like you and trust you—[*Bursts into tears.*—and know you are the best and most honest man in the world.

JUHASZ. I asked Oscar not to say anything to you about it.

ADELE. He was right to tell me. And now, Peter, it is terrible to have to say it straight to your face . . .

JUHASZ. You spent some of the money. No matter, my child. Don't let it worry you.

ADELE. Oh, my God . . . my God. . . .

JUHASZ. All the money isn't worth this agitation. Tell me how much is gone. I'll raise it somehow.

ADELE. A great deal is gone.

JUHASZ. How much? Whatever you spent, I'm sure you did it for the best.

ADELE. Peter . . . forgive me . . . it is all gone.

JUHASZ. All?

ADELE. All. There isn't a heller left. . . . Peter . . . [*Weeping.*] Kill me. I have ruined you.

[*A brief pause.*]

JUHASZ. My dear . . . really . . . it doesn't matter. . . . I thought God knows what had happened . . . but if that's all . . .

ADELE. Don't try to make light of it, Peter. I know perfectly well that what the lawyer told you was the creditors' very last offer. But when I found that out, it was too late. The money was gone.

JUHASZ. Now you mustn't cry. It's childish to take the thing so much to heart. Everything will be all right. The lawyer's heart isn't made of stone.

ADELE [*weeping*]. All lawyers' hearts are made of stone.

JUHASZ. We'll have a nice little talk with him. My money is your money, isn't it? It's all my fault, anyway. Why didn't I save the money myself? . . . You had a perfect right to spend it. Kiss me, and tell what else is troubling you.

ADELE [*kisses him*]. You are so good!

JUHASZ. Well now, out with the other calamity.

ADELE. That is much harder.

JUHASZ. No matter, my dear. It won't be as bad as you suppose.

ADELE. You know that I have always been a faithful wife to you. . . . We have no children . . . and ours wasn't exactly a love marriage . . . but all my affections were yours.

[JUHASZ *takes her hand.*] In the whole three years I never looked at or thought of another man . . . and that is precisely why it's so hard for me now. . . . If I weren't a respectable woman, it would be easy . . . but I simply can't deceive a man like you . . . I can't. . . .

[*A brief pause.*]

JUHASZ. You love . . . some one else. [*She only nods. He utters the word for her softly, thoughtfully.*] Yes. [*There is a pause.*]

ADELE. I respect you too much to let you go on believing for a single moment . . .

[*Another pause.*]

JUHASZ. You don't love me any more.

ADELE. I do care for you, but . . .

JUHASZ. But you love some one else.

ADELE. I love *you* like a brother . . . you know yourself I never loved your body . . . only your soul. . . . It was always a struggle for me . . . but now that I love another . . . I must tell you.

JUHASZ. This comes . . . so suddenly. . . . I—I— [ADELE *sobs.*] You poor, dear child. . . . It's only a sort of illness. . . . It will pass. . . . Every wife goes through such a crisis . . . some time or another. . . . And I'll help you through it. . . . I'll be as gentle and tactful as I can. . . . And before you know it, you'll have forgotten all about it . . . and come to your senses . . . and be the same happy, contented Adele you used to be. . . . My good, loyal Adele, I don't know how another man would act in my place . . . but this is how I feel. . . . But there! Are you crying again?

ADELE. It's unbearable how good you are!

JUHASZ. Shouldn't I have said that?

ADELE. Peter . . . this isn't just a passing fancy, as you suppose. I not only love this man . . .

JUHASZ. What else?

ADELE. I want to belong to him.

[*A pause.*]

JUHASZ. That is . . . more serious. [*Takes an aimless pace or two, sits down, puts his head in his hands.*] When you said that . . . I felt so . . . lonely . . . all of a sudden.

[*A delivery boy enters at the door. He carries three big packages and a rocking-horse.*]

DELIVERY BOY. Mr. Peter Juhasz?

JUHASZ [*goes to him*]. Yes, yes. From the toy store? . . . All right, my son, just put them down. [*Gives the boy a tip; calls.*] Adolf!

DELIVERY BOY. Thank you, sir. Good night.

[*The boy exits at the door.*]

ADOLF *enters through the archway.*

JUHASZ. For your little boy's birthday to-morrow. A horse, a steamship and an automobile. And this is for your little girl, so that she won't feel slighted.

ADOLF [*tries to kiss his hand*]. Oh, thank you . . . thank you, sir!

JUHASZ. Yes, yes. Take them away. . . . Or, wait! Leave the steamship here a moment. I'll have to show you how it works. . . . The automobile is quite simple, but the ship has a rather complicated mechanism. . . . I'll explain it you before I go home. [ADOLF *puts the steamship under the down-stage end of the counter at right, then exits*]

through the archway with the remaining packages. JUHASZ *turns to ADELE.*] Forgive me. . . . My godson, you know.

ADELE [*who has been weeping silently*]. Peter, if you only knew how sorry I am.

JUHASZ. I'm afraid I made it harder for you . . . but I have a headache . . . and everything came at once. . . . I'm sorry . . . but you *were* a bit cruel.

ADELE. Kill me, Peter.

JUHASZ. But you were honest with me . . . you couldn't be anything else. And yet I think it would have been less painful to me . . . if you had simply betrayed me.

ADELE. I can't betray you, Peter. I respect you too much. [*Weeping.*] Don't ask me to do that.

JUHASZ. You want to become another man's wife. How can I prevent you? Go, if you must. He is surely a better man than—

ADELE. No, no!

JUHASZ. But you are leaving me for him.

ADELE. You are a much better man . . . and yet . . . I can't explain—

JUHASZ. Younger, and better looking . . .

ADELE. Do you know who it is?

JUHASZ. I don't want to know.

ADELE. I don't want to hurt you again . . . but you must soon find out.

JUHASZ. Soon find out?

[*A brief pause.*]

ADELE. Oscar.

JUHASZ. Oscar . . . our Oscar?

ADELE. Yes.

[*A pause.*]

JUHASZ. So that . . . so that . . .

ADELE [*ardently*]. I love him,

Peter, and he adores me. And we are leaving the city. . . . You will never hear of us again.

JUHASZ. Oscar. . . .

ADELE. All the time we've been here together, like one big family, we could have done things behind your back. But a man like you. . . . We couldn't bring ourselves to deceive you. Oscar couldn't either. He loves you like a brother.

JUHASZ. I know . . . you are both devoted to me.

ADELE. We are going to Berlin. There a new life awaits us . . . but that's something you can't understand, because there is no spirit of adventure in you. . . . To escape from this cage . . . out into the wide world . . . to try our luck . . . and find wealth, perhaps . . . and power. . . . Let me call him in!

JUHASZ. If you like.

ADELE. He is so fond of you. [*Runs to the archway.*] Oscar! [*Comes down stage again.*] It grieves him so. . . .

[*OSCAR enters through the archway, slowly, sadly. Up stage, between the two counters, he pauses.*]

OSCAR. Does he know everything?

ADELE. Yes.

OSCAR. Peter, this moment had to come.

JUHASZ. Never mind that, my son.

OSCAR [*begins rhetorically*]. From first to last our conduct has been irreproachable—

JUHASZ. It's my own conduct I'm thinking about, not yours.

OSCAR. I see you intend to act nobly.

JUHASZ. Nobly?

OSCAR. Or else you would kill both of us.

JUHASZ. Please! I don't want to stand in your way. I don't know how another man would act in my place, but—

OSCAR *and ADELE [simultaneously]*. The same! Just the same!

JUHASZ. But it's the way I feel.

OSCAR. You are the best . . . the best . . . the best . . .

[Suddenly kisses his hand.]

JUHASZ. Have you gone mad?

OSCAR. Pardon me. Before we part forever there is one promise I want to make you on my sacred word of honor. I'll send you back that money the very first day I get it. Not a day later.

ADELE *[quickly; embarrassed]*. I couldn't tell you before. . . . I had hoped you'd understand. I didn't spend the fifty-one thousand kronen myself. . . . I gave them to Oscar.

OSCAR *[quickly]*. That is, not for me, but for a little enterprise in Berlin in which I have bought an interest. A little shop of which I—that is, we—are to be one-fourth owners. Steger and Company! Steger—that's Steger. And the Company—that's me. . . . At first I thought of putting up my own name instead of Company, but as long as Adele got the money I decided it would be only fair to say Company, and that includes her too. . . .

JUHASZ. She gave the money to you?

OSCAR. I didn't want it for myself. My God, I can live on bread and water. But I couldn't ask Adele to share the uncertain existence of a shop clerk. . . . That would have been, if I may say so, unscrupulous

of me. I had to provide for her future.

JUHASZ. If she gave you the money, it's yours.

OSCAR. I considered that I owed it to *you* to provide for her future decently. You would have every right to despise me if I hadn't.

JUHASZ. I must admit . . . you managed things cleverly.

OSCAR *[in an injured tone]*. What do you mean by that? I did everything honestly and aboveboard. *[Takes ADELE's hand.]* Our relations couldn't have been purer if we were two children.

JUHASZ *[a bit sharply]*. Please! I forbid you to discuss that. She is still my wife. There is no question about her purity here.

OSCAR *[aggressively]*. I might have known you would take that tone.

[PHILIP appears in the archway.]

PHILIP. You are wanted on the telephone, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Coming.

[He exits through the archway;

PHILIP lets him pass, looks frigidly at ADELE and OSCAR, then exits, too.]

ADELE *[suddenly]*. What did you shout at him for?

OSCAR. I know what I'm doing. Just you cry . . . and let me shout. Now hurry and get ready. He's taken it much too hard to suit me. Where's your hat?

ADELE. But I've got to say good-bye to—

OSCAR. Get your hat when I tell you to! I know what I'm talking about. Have some consideration for my weak heart, and don't get me excited.

[JUHASZ reenters.]

JUHASZ [*sees the hat in ADELE's hand*]. It was your sister. She wanted to know whether we could come to supper to-night. I told her . . . that . . . I didn't know.

OSCAR. Adele is going to her mother's.

JUHASZ. Right now?

OSCAR. Right now.

[*There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ. Then . . . it's to-night . . . you're leaving?

OSCAR. We have decided . . . as long as everything is settled . . . that Adele had better not go to your house any more. That would only make it harder for you . . . and we would like to . . . spare you . . . all we can.

ADELE. It's your feelings we are considering. . . .

JUHASZ. You are right. That would be best.

ADELE. I'm going to mother's, and Oscar goes to Berlin to-morrow. And we shan't see each other again until after the divorce is granted.

OSCAR. We mean to do what's correct . . . everything correct. We owe that much to you. And, on my word of honor, you'll get your money back as soon as I have it. I shan't wait for profits. No; I'll send it to you out of the first money we take in. Without a moment's delay. Here's my hand on it.

JUHASZ [*waving away the proffered hand*]. That's all right. I don't think you'd lie to me now.

OSCAR. You know me better than that.

JUHASZ [*to ADELE, who has put on her things*]. Then . . . we shan't see each other . . . for a long . . . for a long time. . . . Perhaps never.

OSCAR [*uneasily*]. Don't say that.

It's not fair to say that. If ever you are in Berlin, consider our home your own.

JUHASZ. Thank you.

OSCAR. And let's not prolong our leave-takings. I've got to consider my weak heart. Excitement is bad for me.

ADELE. Good-bye, Peter. Will you kiss me?

OSCAR. Kiss her. She's worthy of it.

[*Turns away and dries his eyes.*]

JUHASZ [*kisses her*]. Don't cry, Adele. . . . I suppose it had to be . . . but not one woman in a thousand would have acted as you have acted. . . . There! Lift up your head and smile at me. . . . You were a good wife to me . . . and now you are my very good friend. [ADELE *nods*.] Shall I see you as far as your mother's house?

ADELE. No. . . . I'll take a cab. Good-bye, Peter.

[*She nods silently to OSCAR and passes swiftly through the door. There is a brief pause.*]

OSCAR. Only one word more, Peter, about a matter of business, and then we can shake hands and part. I had a talk with the lawyer to-day—

JUHASZ. But, please—

OSCAR. I couldn't go away and let them throw you into bankruptcy. [*Hands him a document.*] Here is the agreement. Read it over when you get home. It stipulates that, in consideration of your unquestionable integrity, your creditors agree not to file a petition in bankruptcy against you, but to wait six months longer . . . for the fifty-one thousand kronen you lent me.

JUHASZ. Lent you? Yes, that's right.

OSCAR. And which I will return to you . . . my word of honor . . . maybe in two weeks, maybe not for three months, but certainly within six months. My word of honor!

JUHASZ [*turning the document over helplessly.*] Yes.

OSCAR. But your creditors make one stipulation. Until the fifty-one thousand is paid to them, they want a receiver to run the business instead of you.

JUHASZ. Receiver?

OSCAR. It's wrong, I know . . . but in some ways the creditors are right. . . . You are too easy with people who owe you money . . . and with the people who work for you. . . . You are not businesslike. . . . What this place needs is a strong hand. . . . They tried to get me to take charge, but I. . . . Of course they didn't know anything about . . . I only said I was leaving the country. . . . Well, the main thing is that on the day you pay the fifty-one thousand kronen the business is yours again.

JUHASZ. And this . . . receiver? . . . When does he take charge?

OSCAR. On the day I leave.

JUHASZ. You said you were leaving to-morrow.

OSCAR. Yes.

JUHASZ. Well, then—

OSCAR. To-morrow morning at eight the receiver will be here.

JUHASZ. Then the shop doesn't belong to me any more . . . and I may as well stay home to-morrow morning.

OSCAR. What's the use of exaggerating like that? Certainly you can come to-morrow.

JUHASZ. As a clerk in my own shop?

OSCAR. Can I help it? Didn't I do everything I could? Didn't I run around seeing people and making arrangements? [*More and more resentfully.*] I didn't expect any thanks for it, but you needn't look at me that way. As for the money, my word of honor—

JUHASZ. I know.

OSCAR [*takes his hand*]. Good luck! [*Points to the archway.*] I'm going that way. I shan't even walk the same street as Adele until the divorce is granted. [*In the archway.*] Don't look at me like that! [*Emotionally.*] I had to provide for her future, hadn't I?

[*He exits.* JUHASZ is left alone.

He looks at the document, crumples it into his pocket, glances around the shop, then sits down near the counter, at right, staring vacantly. PAULA enters through the archway, a letter in her hand.]

JUHASZ. You still here, Paula?

PAULA. About those waterproof coats, Mr. Juhasz. Mr. Oscar referred me to your wife—[*Notices that ADELE is not there; pauses.*—and she said we didn't want any waterproof coats, but I think we really should order a few.

[*Waits for his answer.*]

JUHASZ [*lost in thought, still staring absently*]. Yes.

[*A pause.*]

PAULA. Shall I order some, Mr. Juhasz?

JUHASZ [*looks up at her*]. What? Oh, yes.

PAULA. About a dozen?

[*A pause.*]

JUHASZ. Paula— [*He rises.*] The fact is that from to-morrow on the shop doesn't belong to me.

PAULA. Doesn't belong to you?

JUHASZ. In a word, Paula, my wife has left me and is going to Berlin with Oscar . . . and I have failed. . . . To-morrow morning a receiver, appointed by my creditors, takes charge . . . and he'll be the boss here. . . . So why should I worry my head about waterproof coats?

[*A pause.*]

PAULA. I—I don't know what to say, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Don't say anything, Paula. I didn't say anything myself. No. And let those letters go for to-night. I can't have you ruining your eyes.

PAULA. As if you hadn't troubles enough of your own without worrying about my eyes.

JUHASZ. Troubles? . . . Well . . .

PAULA. I can imagine how you must feel.

JUHASZ. Yes, here I stand like a tree in the park that is only good for lovers to meet under . . .

PAULA. And then go away.

JUHASZ. But first they cut their names in it with a sharp knife. [ADOLF, *carrying his long pole, comes through the archway.*] What's the matter?

ADOLF. It's eight o'clock, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ [*still a bit absently*]. Yes, you can really close up now, Adolf.

[ADOLF *goes out, pulls the grating halfway down.*]

COUNT [*his voice is heard from the street*]. Here, here, here! Are you trying to lock me out again? [*He dodges under the grating and enters. He is wearing a motor coat and cap. ADOLF, pole in hand, follows him in, grinning.*] Tell me, my friend, do

you do that on purpose? [ADOLF *only grins.*] Whenever I try to get in you come along with that big stick and pull the grating down. You don't like me, what? [ADOLF's *grin is broader.*] Here! [*Gives him money.*] Here is something for you. Try to like me better. [ADOLF *tries to kiss his hand. The COUNT waves him off.*] Never mind that. [*The COUNT comes down right. ADOLF exits through the archway.*] He is always trying to close the door in my face. [*Looks at them wonderingly.*] What's the matter? You look so cheerful, Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Excellency . . . I don't know how to tell you. [PAULA *is about to go.*] Don't go, Miss Paula.

PAULA. I only wanted to see whether the cap has arrived for his excellency.

COUNT. Thank you, Paula.

PAULA. Not at all, your excellency.

[*She exits through the archway.*]

COUNT. Well, what is it? Things going wrong after all?

JUHASZ. Not exactly wrong, excellency. I suppose everything that happens is for the best. But just a while ago your excellency was kind enough to repeat what you had often said before. . . . [*Pushes a stool toward him.*] Please sit down.

COUNT [*sits*]. Well?

JUHASZ. That desk at Gerelypuszta . . . which . . . was always open to me.

COUNT. Yes, yes. What of it?

JUHASZ. Well, I'd like to go back to that desk.

COUNT. How's that? In the last ten minutes you've . . .

JUHASZ. In the last ten minutes.

COUNT. That is very interesting. [*Looks around.*] Where is your wife?

JUHASZ. That's just it, your excellency.

COUNT. I don't understand.

JUHASZ. My wife is going to divorce me and marry Oscar. The business is to be taken over by a receiver to-morrow morning. And here I stand, all alone in the world and free as a bird.

COUNT [*jovially*]. My dear Juhasz, you are not a bird, you are now general manager . . . or no . . . general director of the Gerelypuszta Cheese Exporting Company.

JUHASZ. Your excellency's generosity is boundless.

COUNT. The excellence of Gerelypuszta cheese is boundless, and my luck is boundless to get you back again. Juhasz, I wouldn't trust my own brother with that cheese . . . but I'll trust you with it.

JUHASZ. I shall be very happy if . . .

COUNT. I shall be happy. When can you come? Drive down with me to-night.

JUHASZ. Excellency, my things, my house . . .

COUNT. How soon *can* you come?

JUHASZ. Well . . . perhaps the end of this week . . . or the beginning of next.

COUNT. The sooner the better. You can't come soon enough to suit me. [*Rises.*] I congratulate myself. [*PAULA enters through the archway.*] Now we will organize things on a big scale, Juhasz. We shall become an international enterprise. Gerelypuszta Cheeses, Ltd.! . . . And as to my neighbor and competitor, Baron Goldberger, we'll settle him! . . .

But, my dear friend, how selfish of me! I forgot all about your troubles.

JUHASZ. And I forgot all about your caps, excellency. [*Starts to go.*] Excuse me a moment.

PAULA. The caps just came. Philip is wrapping them up.

JUHASZ. One is to go in with that jockey suit.

[*He exits through the archway.*
There is a pause.]

COUNT. Well, Miss Paula, what do you think of it?

PAULA. It's a gorgeous red, your excellency.

COUNT. What is?

PAULA. The cap.

COUNT. You little rogue! You know very well I mean this . . . er . . . domestic tragedy.

PAULA. What *can* I think of it, your excellency? [*Comes nearer to him.*] I know what it means to *me*. I've lost my job.

COUNT. How's that? Can't you stay on with the new boss?

PAULA. I suppose I could, but mother wouldn't dream of letting me. . . . She only let me work for Mr. Juhasz because he has been a sort of second father to me. But I know she won't let me stay under any other boss. . . . And I haven't the heart to oppose mother's wishes. The poor dear is so ill, and she has trouble enough with my wild brother.

COUNT [*who has been studying her appraisingly.*] Too bad! I shall be sorry not to see you any more.

PAULA. Oh, your excellency!

COUNT. But even if you were staying on, I shouldn't come here any more. . . . I only came on Juhasz's account.

PAULA. We all know that, your excellency.

COUNT. Yes. And yet I am really sorry I shan't be seeing you any more.

PAULA. Oh, your excellency!

COUNT. It was always a great pleasure to see you . . . when I happened to come in.

PAULA. Your excellency embarrasses me.

COUNT. May I make a parting confession? Often I came only for the privilege of seeing you and exchanging a few casual words with you. To-day, for instance. Though you did make fun of me.

PAULA. I didn't, your excellency.

COUNT. Because I am an old boy. . . . But all is not old that glitters. Why, my heart feels seventeen when I see you.

PAULA. But, your excellency!

COUNT. Oh, let's drop that "excellency"!

[*PHILIP enters through the archway, drying his hands.*]

PAULA [*unaware of PHILIP's presence*]. You mustn't think I consider you old.

COUNT. Now . . . don't pretend!

PAULA. Your white hair . . . is one of your most attractive features. . . . If you only knew . . . how odious young men are . . . compared with an aristocratic, middle-aged gentleman like . . . Oh, your excellency, I beg pardon. . . . I'll go and get your package.

[*Makes a movement toward the archway.*]

COUNT. Wait! Juhasz will bring it. Don't rob me of this last minute with you.

PAULA [*with fine coquetry*]. Last?

COUNT. You are going home to

your mother, and I am going back to Gerepysuzta. . . . You are a very clever girl . . . and I am not exactly stupid myself. . . . It would not be impossible, I daresay, to find you somewhere in the city. . . . But an old man must be as cautious and circumspect . . . as a young girl . . . and I try to be a very sensible old man. . . . I shall teach myself to do without you . . . slowly, painlessly. [*PHILIP goes up behind the counter at back.*] Poor Juhasz went into bankruptcy just in time for me, just in time.

[*JUHASZ, carrying the package, enters through the archway.*]

JUHASZ. All packed and ready, your excellency. [*Goes to the door.*] I'll give it to your chauffeur.

[*He exits.*]

COUNT. What is that?

PHILIP. One jockey suit and a cap, your excellency.

COUNT [*turns in surprise*]. Oh, you are here too?

PHILIP. I am here, excellency.

COUNT [*turns to PAULA*]. Well, then . . . good-bye, Miss Paula.

PAULA [*with a bow*]. Your excellency!

COUNT. You don't even offer to shake hands?

PAULA. Oh! . . .

[*They shake hands.*]

COUNT [*to PHILIP, going*]. Good night.

PHILIP. Good night, your excellency.

COUNT [*in the doorway*]. Tell that man with the long stick that he can pull this grating down now.

[*Dodges under the grating and exits.*]

JUHASZ [*his voice is heard from the street*]. Good-bye, your excel-

lency. [*The noise of a motor starting is heard. It dwindles and dies out in the distance. JUHASZ reënters.*] Well, children, let's get finished. It is high time we went out of here.

[*He takes out a drawer of the cash register and exits with it through the archway.*]

PAULA. I want to bid you good-bye, Philip. I suppose you will be staying on here.

PHILIP. Yes. You are a very sly young lady, Paula.

PAULA. Am I? Why?

PHILIP. I heard you.

PAULA. Did you hear anything . . . wrong?

PHILIP. Wrong? . . . No. . . . Just clever.

PAULA. What do you mean?

PHILIP. You know what you're doing, my girl. Only you started a bit late. Mr. Juhasz is going, and the shop is gone, and the Count isn't coming back, and you won't be able to flirt with him any more. Too late!

PAULA. Do you think so?

PHILIP. Yes, I do. The Count told you as much to your face.

PAULA. I wouldn't be so sure of that, Mr. Philip.

PHILIP. Of what?

PAULA. That I shan't see the Count again.

PHILIP. Now you're losing your temper.

PAULA [*with growing passion*]. A great deal has gone on in this shop that you didn't know about.

PHILIP. Oh, I think not.

PAULA. You've worked alongside of me for the past three years and don't know me yet.

PHILIP. I think I do.

PAULA. Then you won't be sur-

prised to hear that I'm going to Gerelypuszta, too.

PHILIP. What? What for?

PAULA. To be near the Count.

PHILIP. In Heaven's name! [*Clasps his hands in horror.*] When did you decide that?

PAULA. Just now. . . . This very minute. [*She is greatly excited.*] Are you surprised? . . . For a whole year that Mrs. Juhasz has plagued me. . . . You saw her. . . . She treated me like a dog. . . . Tried her best to drive me away. And why do you suppose I was so patient? Why did I never answer back?

PHILIP. Miss Paula!

PAULA [*still more vehemently*]. What did I endure it for? [*Points to the door.*] For my future, Mr. Philip, for my future . . . who just passed through that door . . . and rode off in his motor car. But I mean to follow him, Mr. Philip. Make no mistake about that. That old man has been staring at me for a year . . . ogling me . . . and I have been . . . slowly and carefully . . . playing my game. . . . You needn't look so horrified, Mr. Philip . . . a filthy little intrigue isn't what I was after . . . No . . . here I have sat . . . sighing away my youth . . . among a lot of motor coats bound for Paris and Ostend . . . pretty travelling veils soon to be worn in London . . . and Monte Carlo . . . out in the great, glittering world. . . . I want to live, too, Mr. Philip, to live, to live. . . . And now shall I give up all hope simply because this little shop has gone under? No, my dear Philip, I shan't let his excellency get away from me that easily.

PHILIP. You won't let him—

PAULA. I'm going to follow him

to Gerelypuszta. The rest will be easy.

PHILIP. And what will you tell your mother?

PAULA. That Mr. Juhasz is taking me. She'll let me go with him.

PHILIP. And what will you tell Mr. Juhasz?

PAULA. That I can't leave him alone in all this trouble . . . that I can't part from him.

PHILIP. Deceive him? You, too? You'd take advantage of him, too?

PAULA. Yes.

PHILIP. You'd use *him* for a purpose like that?

PAULA. I'm sick of poverty, Mr. Philip. . . . If you knew how sick I am of being poor!

PHILIP. It's monstrous!

PAULA. Can I help it? . . . I tell you I won't grow old over a type-writing machine. I won't let myself decay in this dingy office.

PHILIP. But Mr. Juhasz—

PAULA. I'm not considering any one except myself. I need Mr. Juhasz now, and, no matter what you say, I mean to use him.

PHILIP [*scrutinizing her narrowly*]. This isn't wickedness. It's only childish egotism.

PAULA. I mean to do just what I said.

PHILIP. And suppose I prevent you?

PAULA. How?

PHILIP. Suppose I tell Mr. Juhasz exactly what you said.

PAULA. First you worm everything out of me . . . and then . . . But he wouldn't believe you . . . Besides . . . you won't tell . . . you are too fond of him yourself.

PHILIP. That's exactly why. He is bound to find out sooner or later.

PAULA. No. A man like him never sees such things. [*Confidently.*] You won't tell. You won't open your mouth.

[*JUHASZ enters through the archway, carrying his hat and cane.*]

JUHASZ. And now, dear Miss Paula, there is one painful duty left for me to do. I promised your mother that I would look after you as a father . . . and now . . . I must send you back to your mother. . . . I . . . forgive me for the ceremony . . . I discharge you, Miss Paula. . . . But tomorrow I will use what influence I may have with the new boss—

PAULA [*firmly*]. That won't be necessary, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Don't you want to keep your job?

PAULA. No.

JUHASZ. Why not?

PAULA. Because I . . . am going with you, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. With me?

PAULA. With you . . . wherever you may go.

JUHASZ [*amazed*]. Miss Paula!

PAULA. There is no use discussing it. You know I always do what I say.

JUHASZ [*puts down his hat and stick*]. With me, Miss Paula?

PAULA. With you.

JUHASZ. But the place I am going to . . . is a tiny village . . . deep in the country . . . at the end of the world.

PAULA. I'm going, too. If there's work for you, there will be work for me, too.

JUHASZ. But you are young, Miss Paula. . . . Why should you leave Budapest . . . now . . . when so many new enterprises are being founded?

... Why, with your talent and industry—

PAULA. Let us not discuss it, please, Mr. Juhasz. I am going with you.

JUHASZ. Do you hear that, Philip?

PHILIP [*morosely*]. I hear.

PAULA. Promise that you'll take me with you . . . and look upon me . . . as you always have . . . as your child . . . as your friend.

JUHASZ [*deeply moved*]. I am compensated . . . Paula . . . for all . . . all that I suffered to-day. . . . God is good to me, after all.

PAULA [*low, ashamed*]. I am devoted to you, Mr. Juhasz. You know that. . . . Will you excuse me now? I must go, or mother will be worried about me. [*Starts to go.*] Besides, I think Mr. Philip has something to tell you.

[*She exits through the archway.*]

JUHASZ [*deeply touched*]. What a heart she has! . . . That is the stuff that saints and martyrs are made of. . . . And to think that here—[*With an emotional break in his voice.*—here in this dim little shop . . . such loyalty . . . such devotion should have blossomed . . . unknown . . . [*Dries his eyes.*] It's good to know there are such people in the world! [PHILIP, in surly silence, picks up his hat and stick, pulls on his gloves.] Is there something you wanted to say to me, Philip?

PHILIP. Hm. . . . Do you know that . . .

[*Stops.*]

JUHASZ. Well?

PHILIP. Well, you know . . . er . . .

JUHASZ. Don't play the cynic with me, you old hypocrite . . . you . . .

I know what you are hiding under those gruff, silent ways of yours.

PHILIP. No . . . that's not it.

JUHASZ. Now don't pretend to me. . . . I know your faithful heart, Philip . . . you needn't be ashamed because you are touched.

PHILIP [*lowers his eyes*]. You are right.

JUHASZ. I knew it.

PHILIP [*softly*]. I am touched.

JUHASZ. What were you going to say to me?

PHILIP. I wasn't going to say anything.

[*There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ [*picks up his hat and stick*]. I'm a lucky man, after all. . . . My wife and Oscar . . . You must admit they were honest about it. . . . And how eager he was to get me back the shop. . . . And the Count . . . see how generous he was to me. . . . And then . . . to crown it all . . . that good, loyal girl. . . . Really, Philip, love and trust are always repaid in kind in this world. . . . I've found that out. . . . But you needn't look so morose about it. . . .

PHILIP. God bless you, Mr. Juhasz!

JUHASZ. Look after things until I come back. . . . They are sure to send the money by autumn.

PHILIP. Are they?

JUHASZ. Oscar. He'll send it . . . if he has to starve for it.

[*PAULA enters, dressed for the street. Behind her comes ADOLF with his pole.*]

PHILIP. Good night.

JUHASZ. Are you going to the opera?

PHILIP. No. I gave my ticket to the cap-maker's apprentice.

JUHASZ. Then you'll see Paula home as usual?

PHILIP. Sorry. I'm going the other way to-night. Good night!

JUHASZ and PAULA. Good night.

[PHILIP exits through the door.

A brief pause.]

JUHASZ. What's the matter with Philip to-night?

PAULA. He's upset, of course. He loves you, too. . . .

[*A brief pause.*]

ADOLF. Can I close up now?

JUHASZ. Certainly. [ADOLF exits. *A brief pause.*] What are you waiting for? Why don't you pull it down?

ADOLF [*sticks his head in the doorway*]. I was just looking to see if his excellency was coming.

[*He vanishes. The sound of the grating descending is heard.*]

JUHASZ. Now then . . . I'll see you home myself, Paula.

PAULA. Don't bother, Mr. Juhasz. I live quite near, you know.

JUHASZ. No matter. And I'm not in a hurry to-night anyway.

ADOLF [*finished with the door*]. If you please, Mr. Juhasz, your maid telephoned a while ago to ask why you were so late. Your supper is getting spoiled.

PAULA. There, you see. . . . Please don't bother about me.

JUHASZ. Not at all . . . [To ADOLF.] Phone and tell her that I shan't be home for supper to-night. I'll go to a restaurant.

[ADOLF exits through the archway.]

PAULA. You are quite right. . . . The empty house and the vacant place at table . . .

JUHASZ. Not that, but . . . you see . . . my wife is very fond of

asparagus . . . and it's out of season and hard to get. . . . This afternoon I got some . . . the first asparagus to arrive in the city. . . . And I sent it home . . . for supper . . . a surprise, you know . . . Well . . . now . . . if I go home . . . what can I say to the maid? . . . Shall I stand there and be ashamed . . . of the asparagus? [*A brief pause.*] Or shall I eat it myself?

ADOLF [*in the archway*]. I am putting out the lights, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ [*to PAULA, who is about to go*]. One moment. [To ADOLF.] Wait, my son, there is something I promised you. [*He takes the toy steamship from under the counter, at right. He stands behind the counter. ADOLF comes down in front of it.*]

Now, look here, my son. See this little lid? You lift it up like that. See?

ADOLF. Yes, sir.

JUHASZ [*begins in a matter-of-fact way, but gradually his voice grows more sorrowful until, in the end, it is trembling with suppressed sobs*]. In here are two keys. This one winds up the wheels when you want the ship to run along the floor. This one winds up the propeller. See . . . that is the propeller. It makes the ship move through the water . . . if there is any water. The thing to remember is that you mustn't turn the key backwards, for then the spring unwinds. And when you wind it, you must wind it very slowly, just as you wind a watch, very slowly. . . .

[*He turns the key three times while ADOLF watches absorbedly. Nothing is heard but the click of the turning cog-wheels as the curtain slowly, almost imperceptibly, falls.*]

[SCENE: *The COUNT's workroom in a little outbuilding devoted to the business of the estate. A wide glass door back center, with a window on either side of it, looks on a terrace and a quaint old garden beyond. At the right and left are doors to other offices.*

Up right stands the COUNT's huge desk and in front of it, to the right, a small table on which there is a typewriter. Up left is a long table covered with a litter of papers, books and pamphlets. Down left, against the wall, stands a little sofa.

It is a bright summer morning. The COUNT sits at his desk. DOMOKOS, an elderly clerk, is making a report to him.]

DOMOKOS. And about that fellow, Mate. He's the most useless man about the place. An absolute disgrace to the dairy.

COUNT. And the favorite of Mr. Juhasz.

DOMOKOS. Yes, excellency. I'd have discharged Mate long ago, but Mr. Juhasz won't let me. He's sorry for the man.

COUNT. Sorry for him!

DOMOKOS. Mate has such a glib tongue he always manages to get around Mr. Juhasz somehow. But this time . . . he hadn't turned up for three days. This morning he reported for work again, looking very seedy. But this time we've caught him right. I found this letter . . . [Exhibits the letter.] which proves beyond a doubt that Mate is the paid spy of our competitor, Baron Goldberger.

COUNT. Goldberger!

DOMOKOS. Yes, of Baron Goldberger.

COUNT. Not Baron Goldberger.

DOMOKOS. Pardon me . . . no. Of Goldberger. And, if Mr. Juhasz doesn't discharge him now . . .

COUNT. I'll see to it. Where is this Mate?

[He rings.]

DOMOKOS. I told him to wait out there in the little office.

[Points to the left.]

COUNT. Give me that letter. [DOMOKOS gives it to him. SANTHA, an old man, half clerk, half servant, enters at left; waits at the door.] Send Mate in.

SANTHA. Yes, your excellency.

COUNT. Then ask Miss Paula to step in.

SANTHA. Yes, your excellency.

[Exits at left.]

DOMOKOS. Mr. Juhasz is spoiling all the men with that benevolence of his.

[MATE enters at left. He is young; wears a white linen jacket which is soiled and torn. Behind him SANTHA enters and crosses to right, where he exits.]

COUNT. I am told you have been neglecting your work and going off on a spree for days at a time.

MATE. I was home . . . sick, excellency. And Mr. Juhasz . . .

DOMOKOS. You were seen in a beer garden in Budapest three different times.

COUNT. That will do, Mate. Wait out there until you are sent for. Mr. Juhasz will attend to you.

MATE. Excellency, I give you my word—

[SANTHA *is seen crossing the garden from right to left.*]

COUNT. That will do, Mate.
[MATE *exits at left. The COUNT rises.*] Thank you, Domokos. Let me have the rest of your report this afternoon. . . . I am busy now. Leave that letter here. [*Rings.*] Where is Juhasz?

DOMOKOS. I saw him down near the hothouses. I think he's feeding the pigeons.

COUNT. Naturally.

DOMOKOS. Yes, sir.

[*He exits at left as PAULA enters at right.*]

PAULA. Good morning!

COUNT. Good morning, sunbeam. Quick, quick. We can talk now. Your duenna is away . . . feeding the pigeons.

PAULA. Your excellency is always saying unkind things about Mr. Juhasz.

[*She sits at the typewriter.*]

COUNT. And yet I love him as I would my own son.

[*Kisses PAULA's hand.*]

PAULA. I must pretend to be working. If he comes in and finds me just talking to you, he'll be unhappy again.

COUNT. No fear of that now. . . . He is a long way from here.

PAULA. As if that mattered! He divines the fact that we are together. And he can find me with his eyes shut. [*Taps once or twice on the machine.*] Please don't let him catch us like this.

COUNT. This is intolerable, Paula. It can't go on. One of the reasons I sent for you was to tell you that I mean to get rid of Juhasz to-day.

PAULA [*sorrowfully*]. Your excellency . . .

COUNT. There is a dairyman named Mate, a wholly untrustworthy fellow, whom he won't dismiss. That gives me a perfect excuse, and I intend to make use of it. For I can't let this sort of thing go on indefinitely. He's always on your heels like a watchdog, and I'm sick of it. . . . It isn't enough that he's practically useless around the place . . . but he demoralizes everything with that benevolence of his . . . my dignity . . . even my cheese. . . . And to crown it all he makes me play the comedian in my own house. In order to be alone with you I must give you dictation. And in order to give you dictation I must make political speeches. . . . And I detest political speeches. . . .

PAULA [*listening*]. Wasn't that the door? He's just come in the anteroom. Dictate to me! Hurry!

COUNT. It's enough to drive a man to despair. [*Loudly, as PAULA types.*] "If the Minister of Agriculture supposes . . . that the farmers of the country will tolerate . . . such a thing, he is gravely mistaken." I'll discharge him. I'll discharge him this very day. . . . No. . . . Don't write that . . . I don't mean the minister.

PAULA [*as she writes*]. Don't be unkind to him. . . . He's such a dear, gentle soul.

COUNT [*loudly*]. "The tiller of the soil asks little of his Government. . . ."

PAULA [*as she writes*]. It's sheer gratitude that makes him guard me so faithfully, gratitude to me for having come here with him.

COUNT. I've put up with his gratitude until I'm weary of it. It's four months since you came here. Do you

realize it? Four months you have tormented me . . . on his account. Four months you have been postponing my happiness from day to day . . . on his account.

PAULA. You must be patient a little longer. He'll go of his own accord . . . as soon as he gets his fifty-one thousand kronen from Berlin. Meantime, I can't let you be unkind to him . . . no . . . not on my account.

COUNT. He'll never get the money. And I can't wait. I am fifty-six, Paula, and desperately in love . . . in love, do you hear. . . . [*Comes nearer to her.*] You beautiful . . . young . . . thing!

[*JUHASZ enters at left with a big ledger under his arm.*]

JUHASZ. I beg pardon. Shall I check up the livestock, too?

COUNT [*crossly*]. Yes. [*To PAULA.*] "The deplorable policies inaugurated by the Minister of Agriculture . . ." [*PAULA types.*] By the way, Miss, is that detailed statement finished?

PAULA. Your excellency, my eyes have been troubling me . . . and . . . I have only finished with the summaries.

[*Hands him a sheaf of closely written documents.*]

COUNT [*affecting severity*]. You must manage to get more work done, Miss Paula. Please be sure to have the detailed statement ready for me by this evening.

[*JUHASZ exits at left.*]

PAULA. He heard you as he came in. I'm sure he heard you! . . . Oh, I'm so sorry!

COUNT. You needn't be. It doesn't matter any more. I shan't let him hinder me any longer. I can't

afford to. I'm too old. The only thing left to do is pay the fifty-one thousand kronen, give him back his shop and be rid of him.

PAULA. He won't accept it. He'd rather starve.

COUNT [*with a touch of exasperation*]. Curious that your friends never have such scruples, only your enemies.

PAULA. Have you noticed how badly he looks? That's from worrying about me.

COUNT. It's from staying up nights, pacing to and fro beneath my window. He has the bad taste to suppose that I would seduce one of my employees in my own house. . . . But . . . sunbeam . . . our love deserves a worthier setting . . . doesn't it? . . . A flight to Paris by the swiftest motor we can find . . . and from there southward to the sea . . . under the skies of Spain that God only made for people to love under. . . .

[*Comes nearer to her.* JUHASZ enters at left.]

JUHASZ. I beg pardon. I only wanted to give Miss Paula these.

COUNT [*crossly*]. Certainly. Certainly.

JUHASZ [*gives PAULA a bundle of closely written pages*]. Here are the detailed statements his excellency wants. Mr. Santha was kind enough to get them up last night.

PAULA. He did them for me? [*Looks at the pages; smiles; to the COUNT.*] Forty pages, all closely written. Oh, that dear Mr. Santha! I don't know how to thank him.

[*Gives the pages to the COUNT.*]

COUNT [*looks at them*]. Mr. Santha wrote these?

PAULA. Wasn't it darling of him?

Think of it! He must have worked all night, the poor—

COUNT [*comparing them with the summaries*]. Curious how like these are the ones you wrote yourself.

PAULA. Oh, I may as well confess it, your excellency. I didn't write those, either. Mr. Juhasz did.

COUNT. Oh? Juhasz did?

JUHASZ. It was only three pages . . . and Miss Paula's eyes bothered her.

COUNT [*with a sheaf of pages in each hand*]. So, then, Juhasz wrote these three pages, and Santha wrote these forty?

PAULA. Yes.

COUNT [*rings. SANTHA enters*]. Wait a moment, Santha. [*To JUHASZ.*] There was a light in your room until four this morning. What were you doing up so late?

JUHASZ. I'm not a very successful liar, excellency. I wrote the detailed statements, too. . . .

COUNT. Thank you, Santha. You may go.

[*He throws the statements on the table. SANTHA exits at left.*]

PAULA. I am very grateful to you, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Oh, I am glad to have been of service.

[*He exits at left.*]

COUNT. Tell me . . . isn't this Juhasz in love with you?

PAULA [*in honest amazement*]. How can you say such a thing? It is nothing but his goodness, his exaggerated sense of gratitude. He thinks he owes me his aid and his protection because I followed him here into exile.

COUNT. I'll exile him for good this time. Wait and see.

PAULA. You won't be unkind to him . . . please . . . don't be.

COUNT. Don't worry. . . . I'll be absolutely just with him. I'll simply confront him with the case of this fellow Mate whom he can't bring himself to dismiss. And I'll say to him, "Now, it's Mate or you." And as it is perfectly certain that he will never be able to harden his heart to the point of dismissing any one, he'll have no alternative but to go himself. And then . . . [*Ardently.*] my happiness begins . . . and yours, Paula . . . for you are my last love . . . and last love is like the setting sun . . . full of fire and gold. . . .

[*He approaches her ardently.*]

JUHASZ *enters at left, a big book under his arm.*

JUHASZ. The swine aren't entered in the books.

COUNT. Oh! . . . There's a limit to everything! [*Goes to the door at left, calling angrily.*] Mr. Santha! Didn't I say I was not to be disturbed while dictating? Where is the fellow!

[*Exits at left, leaving the door open.*]

JUHASZ [*to PAULA, quickly*]. I heard all the dreadful things he said to you. And it's my fault. I brought you here.

PAULA. But, Mr. Juhasz—

JUHASZ. I brought you here . . . and now I don't know what to do. . . . I . . . I'll talk to him . . . and forbid him to—

PAULA. Please, Mr. Juhasz, don't do anything of the kind!

JUHASZ. He wants to get rid of me anyhow. I know I'm in his way . . . because he wants you. . . . But don't worry, my child, I shan't let him *drive* me away.

[*The COUNT enters at left.*]

COUNT. Absolutely demoralized! All of them.

JUHASZ. The swine . . .

COUNT. Don't bother me now with your swine. Come back later. [*JUHASZ exits at left.*] It gets worse all the time. He used to give us at least a few minutes together, but now he keeps popping in like a—

[*Stops, enraged, for a word.*]

PAULA. He heard what you said to me before.

COUNT. Did he say anything to you?

PAULA. He promised to . . . watch you closer than ever . . . from now on.

COUNT. That's an insult to you! Why don't you forbid it?

PAULA. I thought of doing it, but when he looks at you . . . with those soft, kind eyes of his—

COUNT. I know. He has eyes like a devoted horse. I can't endure them, either. . . . But now I've had enough. The thing must end today. If he comes in once more, you must go out, my dear, and leave me alone with him.

PAULA. He won't come in again. You made it plain to him that he mustn't.

COUNT. You don't know him. He'll be in the moment he hears what he is listening for. I'm perfectly certain he's listening. [*Goes toward the door at left.*] Watch. [*Loudly.*] Paula, I wonder if you know how sweet, how charming, how utterly adorable you are.

[*Approaches the door as he speaks.* JUHASZ enters quickly, determinedly, at left. When he sees the COUNT standing there,

smiling sarcastically, he stops short in the doorway, abashed.]

JUHASZ. May I talk to you about the swine now?

COUNT. Come in. [*To PAULA, sternly.*] Make a copy of what I have dictated, Miss Paula.

PAULA. Yes, sir.

[*Rises, gathers up her papers.*]

COUNT [*sternly*]. A clean and correct copy.

PAULA. Yes, your excellency.

[*She exits at right.*]

JUHASZ. The swine, your excellency—

COUNT. Never mind that, Juhasz. . . . There is something else I want to talk with you about. . . . There are many complaints against you. Very many!

JUHASZ. I know your excellency isn't satisfied with me.

COUNT. But my pigeons are satisfied, eh?

JUHASZ. Is that what you are displeased about, sir?

COUNT. You feed them too much. They are so fat they won't fly any more. And when I ask for a pigeon for my luncheon I am informed that Mr. Juhasz won't permit one to be killed.

JUHASZ. I'm so sorry for the poor soft little creatures. . . .

COUNT. And aren't you sorry for the poor soft little ox?

JUHASZ. I don't know him personally, sir.

COUNT. Humph!

JUHASZ. It doesn't seem right to me . . . to eat your personal acquaintances.

COUNT [*significantly*]. It does to me.

JUHASZ. If that's the only complaint . . .

COUNT. It isn't. There are many more. You and I will have to part company, Juhasz. I can't keep you here any longer. . . . Now every time I broach the subject . . . you look at me like that.

JUHASZ [*averts his eyes*]. I'm sorry, sir.

COUNT [*irritably*]. I once had a horse named Trafalgar. He was just like you.

JUHASZ. Like me?

COUNT. He broke his leg . . . and I couldn't have him shot because he used to look at me . . . exactly as you do. [*In spite of himself, JUHASZ looks at him.*] Don't look at me like that! I forbid it!

JUHASZ [*looking away*]. Yes, your excellency.

COUNT [*consults a memorandum*]. Here is a long list of your offenses. First, there's that potter, Mano Steiner, who owes us eight thousand kronen. You granted him an extension of one year. What for?

JUHASZ. Pots, your excellency.

COUNT. I know that.

JUHASZ. And the poor fellow has had so much trouble of late.

COUNT. Trouble?

JUHASZ. Business trouble.

COUNT. You have no right to be charitable at my expense.

JUHASZ. Wasn't there some other complaint, too, sir?

COUNT. Yes, lots of them. [*Consults the memorandum.*] You owe three hundred and thirty kronen to the all-night café.

JUHASZ. Not for myself, excellency.

COUNT. I know. You assumed that fellow Mate's debts. And now that he has credit again he has resumed his drinking.

JUHASZ. Oh, your excellency, he didn't owe the three hundred and thirty kronen for drinks.

COUNT. For what, then?

JUHASZ. For hard-boiled eggs.

COUNT. Is that what he told you? Let me see. That would make 640 hard-boiled eggs in a single month. Or twenty-one a day.

JUHASZ. Yes, the poor fellow has to eat twenty-two every day. The doctor has put him on an egg diet. . . . But that bill at the café is paid.

COUNT. Juhasz, Juhasz, it's sinful the way you let people rob you. I suppose you haven't a heller to your name.

JUHASZ. Well, just at present—

COUNT. I thought so.

JUHASZ. What is next on the list, your excellency?

COUNT. The next is very serious. It concerns your protégé, Mate. We have discovered that he is Goldberger's spy.

JUHASZ. I don't believe it, sir.

COUNT [*picks up a letter*]. Perhaps this letter, written in his own hand, may convince you. It is written to Goldberger, acknowledging the receipt of two hundred kronen in payment for a full list of our customers. . . . There is no possible doubt about it now. . . . The foreman wanted the man discharged a month ago, but you refused to permit it.

JUHASZ. But I didn't know he had done this, your excellency.

COUNT. Well, you know it now. And I trust you have no further doubt that the man must be dismissed.

JUHASZ. Well . . . if he has done this . . . then . . . I think the foreman ought to dismiss him.

COUNT. The foreman ought?

Oh, no, Juhasz! You'll dismiss him yourself.

JUHASZ [*aghast*]. I?

COUNT. It's your last chance. Here is the letter. [*Gives it to him.*] Mate is waiting out there. You will tell him he is dismissed. [*Rings.*] I'll be back in five minutes. If Mate is dismissed I'll be willing to believe that there is some hope you may mend your ways. If he's not dismissed, then, my son, you and I part company. [*SANTHA enters.*] Send Mate in here. [*SANTHA exits at left.*] Five minutes!

JUHASZ. Excellency, may I ask one favor?

COUNT. Well?

JUHASZ. Make it . . . ten minutes. It's not so easy for me.

COUNT. Very good. Ten minutes. [*Takes out his watch.*] What time have you got?

JUHASZ [*takes out his watch*]. Ten-thirty.

COUNT. At ten-forty Mate is dismissed or you leave this place to-day.

[*He exits at back. Left alone,*

JUHASZ *scratches his head ruefully.* PAULA *enters at right.*]

JUHASZ. For goodness' sake, Paula . . . don't come in now . . . every moment is precious. . . .

[*Pushes her gently toward the door at right.*]

PAULA. What's the matter?

JUHASZ. I've no time to lose now. . . . I've got to hurt some one . . . very much . . . in order to be able to stay near you . . . and protect you. Don't ask me.

[*Pushes her toward the door.*]

PAULA. What has happened?

[*MATE enters at right.*]

JUHASZ. The Count thinks he knows me. But this time I'll show

him he's wrong. Give me your hand. Give me strength. [*Clasps her hand.*] Go now, Paula, and rely on me. . . . You shall see how strong I can be. In ten minutes it will be over. [*PAULA exits at right.*] JUHASZ *closes the door behind her, pauses a moment to collect his courage, then, without turning to face MATE, bellows at him.*] So there you are!

MATE. I've got regards for you, boss, from Budapest. I was in your shop.

JUHASZ. Never mind that now.

MATE. I bought a necktie there. [*Shows his cravat.*] Maybe you recognize it. The people all sent their regards.

JUHASZ. Never mind that now, please. . . . [*Fingers the cravat.*] Thanks, but we have something else to discuss just now.

MATE [*genially*]. They told me business was fine. . . . And they are all expecting you back soon.

JUHASZ. Now, Mate, please don't keep interrupting. I've something very serious— [*Flourishes the letter.*] You have caused me a great deal of trouble, Mate.

MATE [*smoothly*]. Oh, don't say that, boss! I'd rather be dead than cause you any trouble.

JUHASZ [*distressed*]. Now don't talk like that—

MATE. But, if—

JUHASZ [*with determination*]. Be still now. And let me talk.

MATE [*with an injured expression*]. All right.

JUHASZ [*relenting*]. Or . . . what were you going to say?

MATE [*aggrieved*]. Oh, nothing.

JUHASZ. I didn't mean to be rude. I am a bit excited, you see. [*Flour-*

ishes the letter.] This letter was just handed to me. [*Looks at it.*] You took . . . two hundred kronen . . . from Baron Goldberger. [*Shows it to him.*] Is this your handwriting?

MATE. If you say it is—

JUHASZ. Mate, don't make it harder for me. It's painful enough as it is. And I have so little time. . . . Is this your handwriting?

MATE. Well, yes.

JUHASZ. There, you see!

[*A brief pause. He looks at his watch.*]

MATE. Well, I know what to expect. Get it over with.

JUHASZ. You are a traitor, Mate. This letter proves it.

MATE. That's all right. You can discharge me if you want to.

JUHASZ. Why do you make it harder for me, Mate? Do you think I like to do this? . . . You don't even say a word in your own defense.

MATE. What's the use of my saying anything? I know that I've got the sack.

JUHASZ. But how could you do such a thing? *Why* did you do it? *Why?*

MATE. If I told you, you wouldn't believe me. I'm a liar, I am. Everybody says so.

JUHASZ. Don't be so pig-headed! Did you . . . perhaps . . . need the money for something urgent? . . . You haven't a family, have you?

MATE. I have a crippled father.

JUHASZ. There! I knew there was something. Why didn't you say so? Have you no faith in me? [*Fingers MATE's cravat.*] What did they ask you for this necktie?

MATE. Four kronen.

JUHASZ. Why, it only sells for three!

MATE. I only paid two. . . . There are so many wicked people in the world, Mr. Juhasz. I'd have been a different man if I'd 'a been treated right . . . but I wasn't. . . . Everybody around here was always down on me. . . . And now they've got me where they want me. . . .

JUHASZ [*with heat*]. Have they? Not yet. Make no mistake about that. [*Pumping up his determination.*] So you have a crippled father?

MATE. Yes, my poor father!

JUHASZ. It seems to me I heard you were an orphan.

MATE. They say all kinds of things about me around here. My father lives in Szentes. If you can call it living. [*Working himself up into a passion.*] If you must know, I sent the two hundred kronen to him.

JUHASZ [*eagerly*]. Can you prove that?

MATE. Certainly.

JUHASZ. How?

MATE. By this.

[*Shows him a photograph.*]

JUHASZ. By this? This is a photograph.

MATE. Of my father. The picture of my poor old father.

JUHASZ. But this is a photograph of the actor, Girardi.

MATE. They resemble each other a lot. Everybody says so.

JUHASZ [*thoughtfully*]. Hum! And what does this prove?

MATE. That he's the one . . . I sent the dirty money to.

JUHASZ [*undeceived*]. No, Mate. You are lying to me. [*Returns the photograph to him.*] This is unpardonable. . . . They were perfectly right in what they said about you.

[*Looks at his watch.*] You are dismissed, Mate . . . and now you may go.

[*Does not trust himself to look at MATE, but gives him a shove toward the door.*]

MATE [*kisses the photograph*]. Poor father! Who'll send you money now . . . the first of every month?

JUHASZ [*greatly distressed*]. Please . . . stop that . . . and go!

MATE. And my poor little girl . . . who'll feed her now?

JUHASZ. You have a child, too? . . . I don't want to hear about it.

MATE. I didn't say anything to you. [*Starts to go.*] My poor, sick little girl!

JUHASZ [*restrains him; greatly distressed*]. Is she ill?

MATE. What do you care?

JUHASZ. How old is she?

MATE [*dries his eyes*]. Two years old. Her mother is dead. We planted flowers on her grave.

JUHASZ. This is harrowing. . . . I know you are lying again. . . . I mustn't listen to you.

[*Looks at his watch.*]

MATE. A little blonde baby. With hair like flax.

JUHASZ. Ten-thirty-six. You are dismissed.

[*Puts his hands over his ears.*]

MATE. She always says to me, "Papa . . . Papa send money."

JUHASZ. I'm not listening to you. You are lying. . . . But I can't hear you.

MATE. My poor, innocent angel. Her medicines alone cost me . . . Oh, how *can* a man go straight when he has a crippled father and a sick baby to keep?

JUHASZ [*takes his hands from his*

ears]. I didn't hear you. . . . You are dismissed.

MATE. The doctor prescribed sulphur for her . . . and milk.

JUHASZ. I'm not listening.

MATE. No. . . . But I wish I knew how to close my ears when my poor hungry baby cries, "Papa, papa. . . ."

JUHASZ [*at the end of his endurance*]. Liar! . . . You are dismissed. . . . [*Reconsiders it, angrily.*] You are not dismissed! Oh, how can I tell whether you are lying or not?

MATE [*low, reproachfully*]. Oh, Mr. Juhasz!

JUHASZ [*angrily*]. Be still! [*Less angrily.*] Sit down. [*Less angrily yet.*] Have a cigarette.

MATE [*drying his eyes*]. I only smoke cigars.

JUHASZ [*crossly pushes the humidior toward him*]. There! [*MATE takes one.*] Not those. . . . [*Shouts.*] Take a Havana. [*MATE sticks several in his pocket.*] Stop that crying. . . . And tell me, instead, whether you are lying to me or not.

MATE [*sniveling*]. When all a man earns is eighty kronen a month . . .

JUHASZ. I know, I know.

MATE. And has to send forty to his father, and thirty to his sick boy . . . [*As JUHASZ makes a gesture of surprise.*] I mean girl . . . what has he got left? Ten kronen! Can you live on ten kronen a month?

JUHASZ. It's terrible, I know . . . Mate. . . . [*Scratches his head in bewilderment.*] I wish I knew what to do.

MATE. If I had anything left to pawn . . . but I haven't.

JUHASZ [*feels involuntarily for his watch chain*]. If I had any money

myself. . . . But just at present . . . I regret to say. . . .

MATE [*his eyes fixed on JUHASZ's chain*]. If I had a watch . . . or a chain . . .

JUHASZ [*takes out his watch*]. What's the matter with your baby?

MATE. It's anæmic.

JUHASZ. Poor child!

[*Takes his watch off the chain.*]

MATE [*watching him greedily*]. That comes from being undernourished.

JUHASZ [*gives him the watch*]. What the child needs is plenty of fresh milk.

MATE [*regarding the watch in his palm with pretended amazement*]. What's this?

JUHASZ. A gold watch.

MATE [*offers to return it*]. But, please—

JUHASZ. Stop annoying me! [*Pushes it back.*] The pawnbroker will lend you a hundred kronen on it. . . . Some day, when you have the money, you can redeem it.

MATE. But, Mr. Juhasz—

JUHASZ. Take it. You can't get anything on the chain. It's plated.

MATE [*pockets the watch. His voice is tearful*]. People like you, Mr. Juhasz, give a man faith again.

JUHASZ. Stop your crying. . . . I'll speak to his excellency about you. Maybe I can persuade him to keep you on.

MATE. He's a good-hearted man. I'd have spoken to him myself only— [*With a hopeless gesture he indicates his tattered coat.*—I couldn't let him see me in this condition.

JUHASZ [*grasps both lapels of his own coat; despairingly*]. The man will have the coat off my back!

MATE [*takes a protesting stride to-*

ward him]. But Mr. Juhasz . . . you don't suppose that I—

JUHASZ. No, no . . . but stop talking like that . . . or I'll have to take it off. . . . Merciful heaven! To think that such poverty exists in our very midst!

MATE [*weeping*]. You have made a better man of me, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. There . . . there, my boy . . . don't worry . . . everything will be all right. . . . Just rely on me. . . . I'll take care of you. [*Puts an arm about him; his voice quavers with tenderness and pity.*] Come what may, I'll help you. [*The COUNT appears in the doorway at back.*] We'll overlook what you have done . . . and I'll see to it that your wages are raised.

[*The COUNT enters. Seeing him,*

JUHASZ lets his arm fall from MATE's shoulder. There is a pause.]

COUNT. Is this the way you dismiss the man, Mr. Juhasz?

JUHASZ [*in great embarrassment*]. Your excellency . . .

COUNT. I gave you ten minutes to do it in. What time is it now?

JUHASZ [*involuntarily feels for his watch*]. The ten minutes . . . are up, sir.

COUNT. Where's your watch?

JUHASZ. My watch? . . . Er . . .

COUNT. You had it ten minutes ago. [*To MATE.*] Have you got it? [*MATE nods, abashed.*] Give it here. [*MATE gives it to him.*] Now get out of here. And don't let me see your face about my place again. [*MATE slinks out at left.*] So you forgave him? [*JUHASZ is silent.*] And promised to raise his wages? [*JUHASZ is silent.*] And gave him the watch you got from me ten years ago?

JUHASZ. Excellency, I couldn't help it. . . . I can't bear to see people suffer.

COUNT. Juhasz, you can't stay here any longer. I'll give you six months' wages in lieu of notice.

JUHASZ. I don't want to be paid for leaving. . . . I'll go just the same. . . .

COUNT [*crossly*]. I can't send you away without a kreutzer to your name! What the devil is one to do with you? Any one else in your place would have been thrown out bodily, but you! . . . [*Roars at him.*] Am I to throw you out because you have the disposition of a saint!

JUHASZ. You needn't throw me out, sir. I'm going of my own account.

COUNT [*angrily*]. Hold your tongue! You are too damned good for this world!

JUHASZ [*pacifyingly*]. You oughtn't excite yourself, excellency. . . . There is really no need for it . . . and you might bring on a stroke—

COUNT. It's all very well to be soft-hearted and charitable and forgiving. I'd like to be that way myself. But it's a luxury I can't afford.

JUHASZ. I'm no use around here. . . . I know that, sir—

COUNT [*shouts*]. Don't look at me like that! This is unheard of! I come in with the fixed intention of giving you the sack, and here I am—Unheard of! [*Angrier yet.*] Now I'm the Juhasz! [*Roars.*] Do you expect me to send you away because you try to help everybody who is in trouble?

JUHASZ. A man like me does more harm around the place than a hundred lazy workmen. . . . You mustn't consider me, sir. . . . I'll be

all right. I'll go somewhere and wait until my money comes . . . from Berlin. Then I'll have my shop back. [*He raises his eyes to the COUNT, then recollects that it is forbidden.*] I beg pardon.

[*He turns his back.*]

COUNT. Such credulity! Such optimism! [*Goes up to him.*] You are the most absurd old baby I ever—You can look at me now . . . you soft-hearted—[JUHASZ *looks at him.*]—old lamb, you. . . . The only thing to do with you . . . is . . . hug you. [*Puts an arm affectionately around JUHASZ's shoulder. PAULA enters at right. Seeing her, the COUNT withdraws his arm. There is a brief pause.*] I'm a fine dismitter myself! [*To JUHASZ.*] Run along, my son . . . go out to your pigeons . . . and tell them that the old master can't eat his personal acquaintances either. [*JUHASZ flashes PAULA a triumphant glance and exits quickly at left.*]

PAULA. If I had come in a minute later you'd have been kissing him.

COUNT. Quite likely. It's no use. I can't get rid of him.

PAULA. I've thought of a way.

COUNT. To get him out of here?

PAULA. Yes, and of his own free will.

COUNT. It isn't possible.

PAULA. It is. But it will cost a great deal.

COUNT. I'll pay whatever it costs.

PAULA. Mr. Juhasz can have his shop back by paying fifty-one thousand kronen to the attorney for his creditors.

COUNT. But, my dear, you said yourself that he'd never let me pay it for him.

PAULA. Yes, but he is not to know that you are paying it.

COUNT. Who then—

PAULA. He must be made to believe that the money was sent by the person from whom he's expecting it. From Oscar Mezei . . . in Berlin.

COUNT. I see. Not bad!

PAULA. Very simple. Have your cashier put fifty-one thousand kronen in an envelope and with it a notification that the money comes from a Berlin bank. Can he do that?

COUNT [*enthusiastically*]. I'll make him do it. And as soon as Juhasz gets the money—

PAULA. He will hurry with it to the city . . . to pay off his creditors . . . and take over his shop . . . and stay in it.

COUNT. If we hurry, perhaps we can get him off by the noon train. I'll see the cashier at once. The whole thing shouldn't take more than ten minutes to fabricate. . . . You have made me very happy, dear. This clever plan of yours is the first real intimation that you, too, want to be rid of Juhasz.

PAULA. Rid of him! That's a hideous way to put it.

COUNT. Put it as you like, the fact is there. It is perfectly natural for me to be impatient . . . but for you to be is . . . charming.

PAULA. It isn't impatience . . . as much as . . . uneasiness. When I look at him . . . sometimes . . . I feel a twinge of doubt. When I see how pathetically he tries to protect me . . . from you . . . I get a twinge of remorse. It will be different when he has gone. . . . Yet I shouldn't want to see him go empty handed. . . . And neither would I want him . . . ever to find out that—

COUNT. Rely on me. The papers shall be forged carefully enough to

deceive a bank president. I'll go to the cashier this minute. . . . Paula, you have made me very happy. [*He takes her hand and kisses it.*] If I were twenty years younger I suppose I would have kissed you on that red, young mouth of yours.

PAULA. Careful. Some one is coming.

COUNT [*still holding her hand; is about to kiss her.*] No. . . .

PAULA. I heard the outer door.

COUNT. Nonsense!

[*As he bends toward her again*

JUHASZ *enters at left.*]

JUHASZ. Excellency, some of the pigeons have flown away.

COUNT [*does not resent this interruption; very jovially*]. No matter, Juhasz, they'll come back.

[*He exits at left. There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ. He touched you. . . . He touched you with his hands.

PAULA. He kissed my hand.

JUHASZ. If I hadn't come in he would have kissed your cheek. This can't go on, you poor child, you are in serious danger.

PAULA. Aren't you exaggerating, Mr. Juhasz?

JUHASZ. Is it possible you don't understand that he is trying to make you his mistress?

PAULA. It takes two to make that bargain, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. Two to make it, but only one to repent it. . . . You don't seem to realize the game he is playing with you.

PAULA. He has always behaved like a gentleman with me.

JUHASZ. That is the most dangerous part of it. These rich people have such fine manners . . . they are like silkworms . . . they spin a fine

soft thread around a poor girl . . . and she never realizes what they are about . . . until one day she wakes up and finds herself . . . dressed in silk. . . . But I won't let that happen to you. And the Count knows it. That is why he is trying to get rid of me.

PAULA. Why, he loves you like a son. Just now he was embracing you.

JUHASZ. But he'll send me away, sooner or later. I know that. And this is what I want to say to you. Philip telegraphed that he is coming down to see me this afternoon. I'm going back to the city with him. I might as well before I'm driven out. And you are coming with me.

PAULA. I?

JUHASZ. Yes. You can't stay here any longer. It is too dangerous for you.

PAULA. Dangerous! That's perfectly absurd.

JUHASZ. Haven't I seen and heard enough to know? All his advances! All his proposals! Have you ever seen a little bird fluttering helplessly about in a lion's cage?

PAULA. No.

JUHASZ. Neither have I. But I imagine it must be like you are here. . . . I am going to take you out of here, my child.

PAULA. That's awfully good of you, Mr. Juhasz, but—

JUHASZ. Do you *want* to stay here?

PAULA. I see no reason why I shouldn't.

JUHASZ. I am the better judge of that. And I shan't let you stay.

PAULA. I appreciate your motives, Mr. Juhasz. But pardon me if I say

you have no right to decide whether I may stay or go.

JUHASZ. No right? Didn't I bring you here . . . into this danger?

PAULA. Perhaps I came . . . of my own accord.

JUHASZ. I see. His insidious poison has begun to work on you already. Well, Paula, I won't have it that way. You have never seen me determined yet. . . . Perhaps I never was before. . . . But I am now. . . . Paula, [*With a burst of courage.*] I'll take you with me by force if necessary.

PAULA. I repeat . . . you have no right to do that.

JUHASZ [*at a loss for the moment*]. No right . . . no right?

PAULA. You are not my father . . . or any relation of mine.

JUHASZ. I . . . I . . .

PAULA. I used to work for you . . . and I respect you deeply . . . but apart from that—

JUHASZ. I love you, Paula.

PAULA. Yes, but—

JUHASZ. You don't understand, Paula. [*Pauses a moment before he repeats very simply and earnestly.*] I love you. [*A pause.*] That is why I dared to say such things.

[*A pause.*]

PAULA. Why, Mr. Juhasz—

JUHASZ. You are surprised. . . . You thought I kept watch over you quite unselfishly . . . like a brother. . . . Well, so I did . . . at first. . . . I used to pace up and down beneath the Count's window . . . all night long . . . without a thought in my mind except to keep you from harm. . . . Sometimes I was tired and sleepy . . . but there I stayed . . . under his window . . . because it was my duty to protect you . . . and

then . . . gradually . . . I began to realize . . . that I liked to watch . . . that I was never tired or sleepy any more . . . my whole attitude had changed . . . but I didn't tell you . . . I still pretended to be guarding you . . . only because I had your interest at heart . . . while all the time it was because I loved you. . . . And now . . . you can send me away, if you like.

PAULA. Mr. Juhasz . . . I don't know . . . I really don't know what to say.

JUHASZ. You never guessed it?

PAULA. I would never have believed it, if you hadn't—

JUHASZ. I didn't mean to tell you. But when you said I had no right . . . it slipped out. . . . I might have gone on pretending. . . . I don't know. . . . But now I can ask you again . . . to come with me . . . if you will . . . as my wife. [*A pause.*] Won't you answer me?

PAULA. I have been pretending, too, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. You?

PAULA. I let you think I came here . . . out of loyalty to you. But I didn't. I came because I wanted to come . . . because I am bad and depraved. And that is why I want to stay. . . . I am sick of poverty, Mr. Juhasz. . . . I don't want to go back to work in a dingy little office . . . of a dingy little shop. . . . I am young, Mr. Juhasz, and pretty. . . . I want to do the things that make living worth while . . . meet interesting people . . . see beautiful places . . . wear fine clothes . . . enjoy the leisure and luxury that only rich folks can have. . . . I have thought about such things . . . and longed for them so fiercely . . . that it makes me cold

and sick . . . only to think that I may not have them. . . . Oh, it's so difficult to tell you, Mr. Juhasz! My heart is so heavy!

JUHASZ. Do you . . . love the Count?

PAULA. No.

JUHASZ. Tell me the truth. . . . You can tell me now.

PAULA. He isn't a man to me at all. He is only the door that leads into a new life. . . . He is rich, Mr. Juhasz, rich, rich—

[*Hides her face in shame on his shoulder.*]

JUHASZ [*half dazed*]. Come with me . . . and I will be rich, too. . . . I will work for you, Paula, as no man ever worked before. . . . There are people who will help me. . . . I will be ambitious, grasping . . . until I have all the money you want. . . .

PAULA [*still has her face buried in his shoulder*]. And by the time you had made your money I should be too old to want it.

JUHASZ [*bitterly*]. After all, you are right, Paula. I am absurd. Another man would offer to lay down his life for the woman he loved. . . . I offer to open an account in a savings bank. [*She raises her head. There is a knock at the door.*] Come in. [*Louder.*] Come in!

[*SANTHA enters at left, carrying an envelope and two receipts.*]

SANTHA. Pardon me, Mr. Juhasz, but the cashier sent this in. Will you sign this receipt, please?

JUHASZ. Yes. . . . I'll be there in a moment.

SANTHA. You need only—

JUHASZ. Don't you see I'm busy? Tell the cashier I'll be there in a moment.

SANTHA. It isn't necessary. Just take this, and sign.

[*Proffers the envelope and the receipts.*]

JUHASZ [*looks at them*]. Isn't this an error?

SANTHA. It is addressed to you.

JUHASZ [*reads*]. From the Deutsche Bank, of Berlin . . . to the Ungarische Allgemeine Creditbank . . . to the account of Mr. Peter Juhasz . . . from Mr. Oscar Mezei, of Berlin. . . . [*The hand holding the receipt sinks slowly. JUHASZ himself sinks into a chair, then raises the receipt to his eyes again, very slowly, as if his arm were tired.*] From Oscar Mezei, Berlin . . . fifty-one thousand kronen. [*He looks into the envelope; sees the sheaf of bank notes there.*] Didn't I tell you, Santha? I always said he'd send it. But you all laughed at me.

SANTHA. Will you sign the receipt, please?

JUHASZ [*rather dazed*]. Certainly. [*He signs.*]

SANTHA [*takes the signed receipt; leaves the other in JUHASZ's hand*]. You keep this one. It's the duplicate.

JUHASZ. The duplicate . . . yes. Where are you going?

SANTHA. To give this back to the cashier.

JUHASZ. Oh, yes. Thank you, Santha.

SANTHA. Don't mention it, sir.

[*He exits. There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ stands at left. PAULA is at extreme right. He looks at her, still balancing the envelope full of bank notes on his palm.]

PAULA. I congratulate you, Mr. Juhasz. [*He is silent.*] Now you can have your shop back, and everything will be all right for you.

JUHASZ [*crosses to her*]. Yes, Paula, now everything will be all right for me. And for you, too. For now I can give you the things you want . . . fine clothes and beautiful places and all the rest. . . . Take it, Paula.

PAULA. Mr. Juhasz . . . your shop, your creditors—

JUHASZ. What do I want the shop for now? Let the creditors sell it out. There will be more than enough to pay them.

PAULA. But that means your livelihood, your entire future!

JUHASZ. I love you, Paula. It is your future I am thinking of. You don't want to work in a shop . . . or be a shopkeeper's wife . . . you want to live in luxury . . . Well . . . here is money. Take it. [*Forces it into her hand.*] There! Close your hand. . . . Spend it . . . while it lasts . . . and then . . . if you still want to go on living that way . . . it will be easy to get more money . . . too easy for a pretty girl like you. . . . But if you change your mind, Paula, if you change your mind, you can turn back . . . back to this ordinary life. . . . But if you took the Count's money, there could be no turning back. . . . Don't you see? . . . For when a girl's honor is gone . . . she can't turn back. . . . And you will want to turn back. . . . I am certain of that. . . . I know you, Paula. . . . You will want to turn back.

PAULA [*deeply moved*]. You would do this for me? You would give me everything you possess . . . and ask nothing in return?

JUHASZ [*throwing it off, with a whimsical smile*]. Everything I possess? So it is. Let the Count do as

much for you if he's such a cavalier. [PAULA offers him the money, mutely.] No. We are going now . . . we shall both make the noon train to Budapest. . . . You will not stay here with the Count. . . . I see it in your eyes . . . in your tears. . . . You are saved, little Paula, . . . saved from your own folly.

[*He has moved very close to her and has one hand on her shoulder when the COUNT enters. JUHASZ drops his hand. There is a pause.*]

COUNT. Are you dictating, Juhasz?

JUHASZ [*cold, resolute but respectful*]. I have had very good news, your excellency. I am leaving on the noon express . . . and . . . [*Looks at PAULA.*] Miss Paula will tell you the rest.

[*Head high, very sure of himself, he exits at right. There is a pause.*]

COUNT. What's the matter with the man? [PAULA shows him the money.] I don't understand.

PAULA. He gave it to me.

COUNT. I said he was in love with you.

PAULA. Here!

[*She offers him the money.*]

COUNT. Why? What's this for?

PAULA. It's your money.

COUNT. No. . . . It belonged to Juhasz . . . and if he gave it to you . . . and you accepted it. . . .

PAULA. I didn't accept it. . . . I was too overcome to speak. This money means to him his shop, his future, the honor of his name . . . and yet he tossed it to me without a moment's hesitation. I never knew a man could love like that.

COUNT. What are you going to do with it?

PAULA. Give it back to him, of course.

COUNT. I wouldn't do that. . . . He'd only try to give it back to you again, or tear it up, or throw it away. . . . The man's in love with you, you know. . . . I think it were wiser to send the money at once by telegraph to the attorney for his creditors. Then we'll be sure he will reap the benefit of it. We must give him back his shop . . . by force . . . if that's the only way he'll have it.

PAULA. You are right. You are perfectly right. I'll give the money to the cashier myself, and have him send it right off.

COUNT. I would. . . . Have you been crying, Paula?

PAULA. It wasn't exactly amusing . . . to have him offer to make a sacrifice like that . . . after all we had done to deceive him.

[*JUHASZ enters at right. He is carrying his hat and umbrella.*]

JUHASZ. Doubtless your excellency knows everything.

[*PAULA exits at left.*]

COUNT. No, Juhasz. All I know is that you got some money from Berlin.

JUHASZ [*proudly, firmly*]. Yes, and thank God it came in time to rescue that poor girl from your dishonorable attentions. She doesn't need your money now. She has mine, mine that was earned by hard, honest labor.

COUNT. Juhasz!

JUHASZ. I'm sorry to be compelled to speak to you like this, excellency. God knows I am grateful to you for all you have done for me, but I am leaving your house, and Paula is coming with me.

COUNT. She is going with you?

JUHASZ. Yes, your excellency.

COUNT. Do you think it wise to give her all your money?

JUHASZ. It was my own money. I do what I want with it.

COUNT. My dear Juhasz, you are riding a very high horse. I mention it only because the fall is apt to be painful. Have you made sure the lady has accepted your generous gift?

[PAULA enters quietly at left.]

JUHASZ. I don't know what you mean?

COUNT. Perhaps it would be best to ask her.

JUHASZ. Paula, his excellency . . . just said something . . . I didn't understand.

PAULA. I couldn't take it, Mr. Juhasz . . . I couldn't. . . .

JUHASZ. Couldn't take it?

PAULA. I have sent the money to Budapest . . . by telegraph . . . to the attorney for your creditors. [There is a pause. The COUNT exits at back on tiptoe.] You didn't give me a chance to speak before. . . . I appreciate what you tried to do for me . . . any woman would . . . but I couldn't let you ruin yourself on my account.

JUHASZ [puts the worst construction on her refusal]. He can give you more. . . . That's true enough!

[She does not answer. There is a pause. SANTHA enters at back. Behind him comes PHILIP.]

PHILIP.]

SANTHA. There he is.

[SANTHA exits.]

PHILIP. Good morning, Mr. Juhasz. Did you get my telegram?

[He bows curtly to PAULA.]

JUHASZ. I got it, Philip. How are you?

PHILIP. I met his excellency in the

garden. He said I would find you here. Am I interrupting?

JUHASZ. No, Philip. I was only saying good-bye to Miss Paula.

PAULA [cordially]. Are you still angry with me, Philip?

PHILIP [very earnestly; bows coldly]. Yes, I am. [To JUHASZ.] I am glad to hear that you are coming to Budapest. That's what I came for. To ask you to come to town for a day or two.

PAULA. How are things at the shop?

PHILIP [ignoring her]. That's really what I came for. I hope you don't mind my saying, Mr. Juhasz, . . . that business has been wonderful since you went away. The receiver—

JUHASZ. Mr. Geiringer?

PHILIP. Yes. . . . Mr. Geiringer has been collecting all the old outstanding accounts and keeping a sharp eye on the cash. He sent me down here to see you, Mr. Juhasz. It seems he has fallen in love with the shop, and has been wanting to buy it for himself. And when he found out that Mr. Oscar had gone bankrupt in Berlin, he decided—

JUHASZ. What's that? What did Mr. Geiringer find out?

PHILIP. That Oscar had gone into bankruptcy. . . . Then he went straight to the lawyer for your creditors.

JUHASZ [excitedly]. Slowly, please. You say that Oscar went bankrupt in Berlin?

PHILIP. Yes. Didn't you know it?

JUHASZ [looking at PAULA]. No.

PHILIP. I'm sorry to have been the first to tell you . . . but every one in the city knows it.

JUHASZ. You are quite sure?

PHILIP. Well, his wife has been back in Budapest, living with her mother, for the past two weeks. . . . And I see Oscar every day.

JUHASZ. Are they divorced?

PHILIP. No, but they are so hard up that they have to live at her mother's house.

JUHASZ. If that's so, there has been a terrible mistake somewhere. [*He looks again at PAULA; takes out the receipt, crosses to PHILIP.*] Read this.

PAULA. I'll leave you alone.

[*She starts for the door.*]

JUHASZ [*takes her by the hand*]. No, Paula, you will stay here, please.

PHILIP [*reading the notice*]. The Deutsche Bank . . . Oscar Mezei . . . fifty-one thousand kronen. [*In great astonishment.*] I can't understand this at all. . . . He had so little to show when they put him in bankruptcy that he was lucky not to be sent to prison . . . and since then he has been wandering around Budapest in shabby clothes, borrowing a krone from anybody who'd lend him. . . . Why, I lent him two myself the day before yesterday. [*There is a pause.*] Did this money really arrive?

JUHASZ [*has not taken his eyes off PAULA*]. Yes.

PHILIP. I can't make that out at all.

PAULA. You had to find out sooner or later, Mr. Juhasz. . . . The money didn't come from Oscar Mezei. . . . It didn't come from Berlin.

JUHASZ. Where did it come from?

PAULA. His excellency wanted to help you. . . . He sent you the money . . . and had those bank notices written here.

JUHASZ. Written here?

PAULA. Yes. . . . You see—

JUHASZ. You knew it all the time?

PAULA. I was happy to see you get your shop back, and—

JUHASZ. You knew it was all a pretext to get rid of me? You knew it wasn't my money?

PAULA. Yes, I knew it, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. And while I was saying those boastful things to you . . . and making sacrifices for you . . . with another man's money . . . you were inwardly laughing at me all the time.

PAULA. I cried, Mr. Juhasz.

JUHASZ. It wasn't necessary to cry or to laugh or to take all these secret precautions to get rid of me. You need only have told me the truth. [*On the terrace at back a servant girl appears. She is carrying JUHASZ's overcoat and bag. He sees her and turns to PHILIP.*] Come, Philip. [*His voice is low and trembling with sorrow and humiliation.*] Let us go.

[*They start up toward the door.*]

PAULA. Mr. Juhasz . . . won't you forgive me . . . and shake hands . . . before you go?

JUHASZ [*going; does not look at her*]. Good-bye, Miss Paula.

PAULA. Have you forgotten all you said to me? You are leaving me alone . . . alone with him. [*JUHASZ stops, turns to her slowly. Seeing this, she gathers courage.*] You are leaving me like this because your pride is hurt. You don't care any more . . . what becomes of me.

JUHASZ [*opens his mouth, closes it again, wavers, then suddenly roars at PHILIP, who has been looking on in blank amazement*]. Why do you stand there like a blockhead? Why don't you take me away from here? Can't you see I am about to stay?

[*PHILIP takes his arm and leads*

him out at back. There is a pause. PAULA watches them go, then she crosses slowly to the COUNT's desk. In the garden, coming from the right, the COUNT appears. He stands in the doorway a moment, looking off left, apparently watching JUHASZ and PHILIP depart.]

COUNT. Can I believe my eyes? Is that really Juhasz going toward the station? [She does not reply. He comes in. On the threshold he glances again off left.] If they hurry they can still catch the 12:05. It just pulled into the station. [Looks off left once more; comes down.] Well, sunbeam! [PAULA looks at him sorrowfully then lowers her eyes.] We are alone.

PAULA. Alone.

COUNT. It is hard to realize he is really gone. I shall go on expecting him to pop in that door any moment, or appear at the window, or crawl from under the table. . . . It doesn't seem possible that I'm free of him at last . . . that we are free.

PAULA [sadly]. Free.

COUNT. But it's true, little sunbeam, it's true! No more dictation. No more political speeches. No more interruptions. . . . Now all that remains to be done is have the car overhauled . . . telegraph to Vienna, Salzburg, Paris . . . for the best rooms in the best hotels . . . for the most exquisite frocks . . . for the most magnificent cabin on the swiftest boat to the most beautiful seaport in Spain. . . . [Comes toward her ardently. The whistle of the departing train is heard. PAULA jumps up as if some one had called her, and makes an involuntary move-

ment toward the door at back.] His train. [Angrily.] Is he to hinder me even now? It was just as if he had called back to us. [PAULA goes toward the door at right.] Why, Paula! Where are you going?

PAULA [stops at the typewriter]. To my work. . . . Unless your excellency wishes to give me dictation.

COUNT. Dictation? Are you serious?

PAULA. Yes.

COUNT. But why? . . . Did anything happen . . . between you and Juhasz?

PAULA [softly]. Nothing happened.

[Starts to go.]

COUNT [in polite resignation]. No . . . no . . . wait . . . I'll dictate, if I must. [She sits at the machine. He repeats mechanically, distrustfully.] I'll dictate, if I must.

[Eyes her narrowly.]

PAULA. We stopped at "The deplorable policies inaugurated by the Minister of Agriculture—"

COUNT. Deplorable policy . . . yes. Well . . . if I must . . . go ahead . . . [Sighs.] "The very deplorable policy . . ."

PAULA [writing]. Policy.

COUNT. "Inaugurated by the Minister . . . leaves the farmer bewildered and quite helpless."

PAULA [as she writes, bows her head lower over the machine]. Helpless.

COUNT. "Now the farmer is devoted to the minister . . ." [His quick expressive glance meets her eye as she looks up.] ". . . but the minister does not love the farmer."

PAULA [writing]. Farmer.

COUNT. "And can the farmer be

blamed for feeling abandoned and betrayed?"

PAULA. And betrayed.

COUNT. "But I, for one, know that his excellency, the Minister of Agriculture . . . belongs to the old school of honor . . . to those who will not abuse—"

PAULA. Abuse.

COUNT. "The faith that was placed in them."

PAULA. The faith . . .

[*Stops writing suddenly.*]

COUNT. "The farmer does not ask for sympathy. He wishes no allegiance that is not conscientiously felt. Yet he hopes, yet he believes he still can win the minister to—"

PAULA [*sorrowfully*]. He mustn't believe that, your excellency.

COUNT. Go on writing, Paula, that belongs in the speech. . . And you may add that I, too, think that

it is a forlorn hope, a mistaken belief, which the farmer must teach himself to renounce. [PAULA *bends over the machine, puts her hand over her eyes.*] What is it, my child? Don't you feel well?

PAULA [*rises*]. I beg pardon, your excellency . . . I have had the strangest feeling . . . since . . . since he went away from here. . . . I don't know how to describe it. . . . I don't know what it is. [*Her voice is restrained, embarrassed.*] But I really believe . . . [*Bursts out angrily.*] I've fallen in love with this Juhasz.

[*She hurries out at right. The COUNT stares after her a moment thoughtfully, lights a cigarette, and as he flicks the ashes from it*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT THREE

[SCENE: *The shop again. It is a sunny autumn morning. When the curtain rises JUHASZ is escorting the UNASSUMING LADY to the door, which PHILIP holds open for her.*]

UNASSUMING LADY [*as she goes*]. Thank you. I will telephone you on Wednesday about noon, and if the materials have arrived I will come in during the afternoon some time. Good day.

JUHASZ. Good day, madame.

PHILIP. Good day.

UNASSUMING LADY [*to PHILIP*]. Good day.

[*She exits. PHILIP closes the door. JUHASZ returns to the counter down right and begins clearing away.*]

JUHASZ [*gloomily*]. This place gets more like a graveyard every day.

PHILIP. I don't see how you can say that, Mr. Juhasz. You've only been back two weeks, and in those two weeks you have done more business than you used to do in two months.

JUHASZ [*morosely*]. Not enough to suit me.

PHILIP. It has become the fashion to buy here. Everybody in Budapest seems anxious to help you.

JUHASZ. Because they are sorry for me. I don't want them to be sorry for me.

PHILIP. Nonsense! It's because they like you. You ought to be very happy.

JUHASZ. I'm not happy. Do you

understand? And I won't be happy until I have paid him back every heller he laid out for me.

PHILIP. At this rate it won't take long.

JUHASZ. I haven't slept in two weeks, and I shan't sleep while I remain under obligation to him.

PHILIP. I really don't see why you are so angry with the Count. After all, he did it for your good.

JUHASZ. He did it for his own good. And now he laughs at me . . . he and . . . Paula . . .

[*The door opens. OSCAR stands irresolutely on the threshold. He is shabby and crestfallen.*]

OSCAR. Good morning.

JUHASZ. Good morning.

OSCAR. Good morning, Philip.

PHILIP. How do you do?

[*Turns his back on OSCAR and, with ostentatious delicacy, exits through the archway. There is a pause.*]

OSCAR. He's angry with me. [*A pause.*] I hope . . . you are not.

JUHASZ. No.

[*He continues to clear away.*]

OSCAR. I hope you don't mind my coming here. I have several reasons for coming. First, I consider it my duty. . . .

JUHASZ. Please! You have no more duties where I am concerned.

OSCAR. Oh, but I have!

JUHASZ. Yes, I know. You can't pay me.

OSCAR. Not at present. Unfortunately! . . . In the second place, I owe Philip three kronen . . . [*Fumbles in his pocket.*] that I want to pay him. . . . In the third place, knowing what a kind heart you have—

JUHASZ [*impatently*]. Say what

you have to say, and make it short. I am busy.

OSCAR [*with an ironic glance around the empty shop*]. One would never think it.

JUHASZ. Well, if it interests you, business is fine. I've done more in the past two weeks than I used to do in two months. Yes!

OSCAR. Really? Really? I am very glad to hear it.

JUHASZ [*impatently*]. Well? Say what you have to say, and get it over with.

OSCAR. Why, er . . . to be brief . . . I want a job.

JUHASZ. Where?

OSCAR. Here.

JUHASZ. With me? You want a job here?

OSCAR. Yes.

JUHASZ [*almost speechless with astonishment*]. Well! . . . My dear man . . .

[*He comes around to the front of the counter, trying vainly to find words to express his feelings.*]

OSCAR. If you knew how poor we are—

JUHASZ. So . . . so . . . you take me for an utter idiot!

OSCAR. Please don't say that . . . please!

JUHASZ. You must, to ask me that.

OSCAR. I've been everywhere. I've been at Laszlo and Barna's, at Chellis's, at Semlinger and Weiss's, at Stein's, at Brunner's, at Kramer's, at Gold's, at Reedo's, at Kelamen's . . . every shop in town . . . and they all know that I am the most competent man in the business . . . but they all gave me the cold shoulder . . . [*Points accusingly at JUHASZ.*] . . . on your account!

JUHASZ. On my account? That's very likely!

OSCAR. It's true. They all say they won't have an employee who could abuse the confidence of a man like you. Yes . . . you can stare . . . but it's true. You are keeping me out of a job.

JUHASZ. I am?

OSCAR. If you were a plain, ordinary man . . . like every one else, nobody would care what had happened between us . . .

JUHASZ. Now, really, this is—

OSCAR. I am practically boycotted, that's what I am! Can I help it if you are a saint? Wouldn't I have fallen in love with your wife just the same if you had been a scoundrel? Why should I be held answerable for your virtues?

JUHASZ. No, that's not fair.

OSCAR. I acted honestly and fairly toward you.

JUHASZ. Let us say you did.

OSCAR. And certainly Adele did.

JUHASZ. That's true.

OSCAR. And *now* look at me . . . I had no supper last night, if you want to know it. . . . Neither I nor your wife.

JUHASZ. When you can't buy her supper, then she's *my wife*, eh?

OSCAR. Go on and joke about it. . . . But we went to bed without supper.

JUHASZ. But then . . . she was *your wife*.

OSCAR. Your jokes don't alter the facts. You are responsible for this.

JUHASZ. For what?

OSCAR. For the fact that we are starving. For the fact that I am shabby. And for . . . [*Raises his trouser leg.*] the fact that my socks are in holes. . . . And for the boy-

cott against me. . . . But if you don't care whether your former wife starves or not— [*JUHASZ reaches for his purse. OSCAR puts out a firm, protesting hand.*] No, my friend, no! [*Heroically.*] We don't accept alms. . . . Believe me, you'd be the last I'd come to for a job if I had only myself to consider. You can imagine what I went through before I brought myself to the point of crossing your threshold. And now if, after all, *you* send me away too—

JUHASZ [*touched, but resisting his impulse*]. Will it always be like this? . . . Why can't they let me be?

[*Turns, comes down right, passes behind the counter. PHILIP enters through the archway.*]

OSCAR [*follows JUHASZ*]. Well . . . what do you say?

JUHASZ [*through his clenched teeth*]. I can't. . . . You mustn't ask it of me. I'll do anything but that. . . . My dear fellow, you must see I can't do that . . .

OSCAR [*bends over the counter toward him*]. Then, at least, will give me six pair of black socks? [*Raises his trouser leg.*] Mine are in tatters.

JUHASZ. Oh!

OSCAR. You won't even do that for me?

JUHASZ [*impatiently*]. Certainly I will . . .

[*Takes a box from the shelves, throws it on the counter.*]

OSCAR. You are not going to offer me those HBs.

JUHASZ. What kind of you want then?

OSCAR. You might at least give me KMs.

JUHASZ. I have no more KMs. They are all gone. [*Puts out an-*

other box.] Here are some AWs. [*Opens the box.*] They are very good.

[*Shows him a pair.*]

OSCAR. Are you trying to tell me these are good? [*Fingers them.*] Cobweb?

JUHASZ. Not at all.

[*He feels them, too.*]

OSCAR [*feels them again*]. Why, if I put these flimsy things on now they'd be in holes before I got home.

JUHASZ. They don't knit socks of steel wire, you know.

[*The THOROUGH YOUNG LADY enters.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Good morning. [*PHILIP, JUHASZ and OSCAR return her greeting simultaneously. OSCAR, socks in hand, even bows and smiles to her. She addresses OSCAR.*] I'd like a dozen very fine men's handkerchiefs.

OSCAR [*sadly, pointing to PHILIP*]. There, please.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Yes.

[*She goes to PHILIP at the back counter.*]

OSCAR. It's enough to break your heart.

[*He looks back at them enviously, dangling the socks from his hand.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY [*to PHILIP*]. Now I don't want the kind that fade when they are washed.

PHILIP. All our handkerchiefs are absolutely fast colors, madame. [*Puts out a box full.*] Won't you sit down?

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Thanks.

[*She sits and examines the handkerchiefs.*]

PHILIP. These are batiste, madame, and these are French linen.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Haven't you got these in a bigger size?

PHILIP. Yes, ma'am. [*Puts out another box.*] These are bigger.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Are these the very largest?

PHILIP [*indicating others in the same box*]. Those are larger.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Are these the largest you carry?

PHILIP. There is no larger handkerchief made, ma'am.

[*He opens an enormous handkerchief.*]

JUHASZ [*impatiently*]. Do you want these socks or not?

OSCAR. It's enough to break your heart! Why doesn't he show her the Rumbergers?

JUHASZ. He knows what he's doing. [*Impatiently.*] Please don't take up any more of my time. You can have these if you want them.

OSCAR. These shoddy things!

JUHASZ. I can't be bothered with you any longer.

OSCAR. You can't palm them off on any customer, yet you expect me to take them. Why, they are the worst quality in the shop!

[*The DISSATISFIED LADY enters.*]

JUHASZ. Good morning.

[*Leaving OSCAR, he goes to the back counter.*]

DISSATISFIED LADY [*joins JUHASZ*]. Good morning, Mr. Juhasz. I want to look at some nice neckties. Tomorrow is my husband's birthday, and I want to get him some for a surprise.

JUHASZ. Will you step this way, please?

DISSATISFIED LADY. He told me exactly the kind he wanted, and said I could go as high as a hundred kronen.

JUHASZ. I see. A real surprise.

DISSATISFIED LADY. Yes.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. No, no, no . . . not lilac.

JUHASZ. Instead of buying ready-made ones, why not select your patterns and have them made up?

PHILIP. This is the newest color, Jerusalem blue.

DISSATISFIED LADY. You are sure you could get them out for me in time?

JUHASZ. Oh, yes. That would give you the choice of some very nice silks in restricted patterns.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. This straw color is very attractive.

DISSATISFIED LADY. I might look at them.

JUHASZ. We never cut more than one tie of each pattern. Would you stop in here?

[*He indicates the archway. The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN enters.*]

PHILIP. Good day, sir.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Good day.

JUHASZ [*to the NERVOUS GENTLEMAN*]. Good day. Just a moment, sir.

PHILIP [*to the THOROUGH YOUNG LADY*]. These are Rumbergers. A very well-known brand.

JUHASZ [*flashes Oscar a look of triumph*]. After you, madame.

[*Follows the DISSATISFIED LADY off through the archway.*]

PHILIP. Will you have a seat, sir? I'll be with you in just a moment.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Thank you.

[*He remains standing at the counter, right.*]

PHILIP. Pastel green, pastel brown, pastel blue, pastel yellow.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. I don't know what pastel is.

PHILIP. Pastel is four kronen fifty, madame.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. You haven't got something about half pastel, have you.

PHILIP. Yes, we have. [*Puts out still another box. To the NERVOUS GENTLEMAN.*] Won't you sit down, sir? Mr. Juhasz will be there in a moment.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. That's all right.

PHILIP. These are lighter . . . two kronen apiece lighter.

[*The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN comes down to the end of the counter where OSCAR stands disconsolately before the open box of socks, one pair still held in his hand.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. And what about these darker shades?

[*The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN pokes in the box of socks.*]

PHILIP. They are one krone fifty darker.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. I'd like something between the two.

PHILIP [*pulls down another box*]. Between the two.

OSCAR [*deferentially*]. Those are socks, sir.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. I see they are.

OSCAR [*very deferentially*]. Would you like to look at some, sir?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Yes.

OSCAR [*shows the pair he is holding in his hand*]. Black. Fil d'Ecosse.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. I'm afraid they are too expensive. Let me look at the first ones again.

NERVOUS GENTLEMEN [*looks at his watch*]. I'm afraid I can't wait.

PHILIP. One moment more, sir. Mr. Juhasz will be right in.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. I know what your moments mean.

[*Picks up a sock.*]

OSCAR [*ingratiatingly*]. Mr. Juhasz will be right in, sir. Now here is an exceptionally fine stocking, sir.

[*Shows him the pair he has been holding.*]

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*compares it with the one he is holding*]. Just the same as this, isn't it?

OSCAR. Just the same. Genuine Fil d'Ecosse.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Is it really good?

OSCAR. Absolutely.

[*He is at the end of the counter now.*]

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. It looks good.

OSCAR. You wouldn't want a better sock, sir.

PHILIP [*who has been watching them; angrily*]. Coming right away, sir. One second more!

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*looks at him, then at OSCAR*]. You . . . work here?

OSCAR. Well . . . not exactly, sir . . . I . . . I . . . I'm a relation of Mr. Juhasz's.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Because I can't wait any longer.

OSCAR [*goes swiftly behind the counter*]. Then just let me wait on you, sir . . . until Mr. Juhasz comes. This is a fine quality, sir, absolutely first class.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Will these tear easily?

OSCAR [*laughs*]. These? These are the strongest Fil d'Ecosse made. [*Pulls at the hose.*] They're like steel.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. They look good.

OSCAR. And they will feel good on the foot.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. I want a good quality.

OSCAR [*spluttering in his eagerness*]. We sell nothing but first-class goods, sir. You won't find a more durable Fil d'Ecosse anywhere? My . . . my brother-in-law imports it direct from England.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. I'll take some. Then I want some with colored clocks.

OSCAR. How many of these, sir?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Well, if they are really so good, give me a dozen pair.

OSCAR. Yes, sir. Twelve.

[*Counts them briskly.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Do you mind letting me look at those first ones again?

[*The DISSATISFIED LADY and JUHASZ reënter.*]

DISSATISFIED LADY [*speaking as she enters*]. . . . and my husband is very fond of bow ties, those gay ones they are wearing now.

[*Comes down left.*]

JUHASZ [*without noticing OSCAR, he comes down to the table at left*]. The bow ties are here, madame. Considered very smart just now. Restricted pattern, too. We only make up two or three of each. A man doesn't like to see the tie he is wearing . . .

[*Now he sees OSCAR, who has just climbed up on a stool to reach some boxes on the top shelves. They look into each other's eyes across the shop. JUHASZ's mouth remains open, the word sticks in his throat,*

his hand, holding a necktie, remains poised in the air.]

OSCAR [*quickly*]. The gentleman couldn't wait. He was about to walk out. I didn't want to see a customer walk out of the shop, so I just showed him one or two things in a hurry. . . . I'd like to know about what size. Will you show me your hand, please? [*The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN extends his hand. OSCAR looks at JUHASZ again, greatly flustered, takes the NERVOUS GENTLEMAN'S hand, shakes it cordially.*] How do you do?

[*He stares at JUHASZ anxiously.*]

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. What do you say?

OSCAR. Oh, pardon me! . . . Will you close your hand, sir? [*The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN extends his fist. OSCAR measures a sock over it.*] These are just right.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY [*to PHILIP*]. Let me see? Will they wear?

JUHASZ [*to the DISSATISFIED LADY*]. A man doesn't like to see the same tie he is wearing on somebody else.

[*He is still staring at OSCAR.*]

OSCAR [*rapidly*]. Three pair. . . . Yes, sir. And a dozen of these . . . and now— [*Scans the shelves.*] Long black Fil d'Ecosse with clocks. [*Takes down a box and throws it on the counter.*] These are really excellent. [*Opens the box in feverish haste, shows the socks.*] We are the only ones in the city who carry them. . . . You can do almost anything to this stocking without harming it . . . boil it, bake it, soak it in lye, in alcohol, in vitrol. . . . May I see your hand again?

DISSATISFIED LADY [*who has been rummaging in the box, now has sev-*

eral neckties in her hand]. These aren't bad.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*extends his fist*]. It's socks I want, you know, not gloves.

OSCAR. Ha, ha, ha! That's good! [*Measures.*] These are exactly right.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Sure they won't be too small?

OSCAR. Perhaps just a half size larger.

[*Turns to the shelves again.*]

PHILIP. The color won't run if they are washed in lukewarm water.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Are you quite sure?

[*The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN takes the socks from OSCAR and inspects them.*]

DISSATISFIED LADY. These aren't exactly what I wanted either, but I'll take them. How much does it all come to?

JUHASZ [*still watching OSCAR. His voice trembles*]. Seven kronen. . . . And these are five-fifty . . . these long ones . . . nine kronen eleven.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. What did you say these were?

DISSATISFIED LADY. I'm sure my husband won't like them.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY [*rises*]. Yes, perhaps I had better look at those, too.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. And now I want a couple of pair with some sort of design, not clocks.

OSCAR. Stars, circles, dots, triangles, squares, circles, stars, squares, dots—

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Some very quiet design.

OSCAR [*contemplates the shelves*]. Quiet, quiet . . . Just a moment, sir. I'll bring it right here.

[*He hurries off through the archway.*]

DISSATISFIED LADY. These are rather good. But I only see one.

JUHASZ. There must be more.

[*He rummages in the box.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Now, if you don't mind, we will go over the lot from the beginning. Seeing so many kinds gets one all confused.

PHILIP. Just as you say, madame.

OSCAR [*reënters with a box*]. How do you like these, sir?

[*Puts it on the counter.*]

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Too loud. Much too loud. I want something very quiet.

OSCAR [*greatly perturbed*]. If I only knew where they were. [*In perplexity.*] Quiet, quiet, quiet . . . [*Looks at PHILIP.*] If I only knew where those . . . [*As PHILIP ignores him, he raises his voice.*] They used to be kept here on the third shelf.

JUHASZ [*grudgingly, angrily*]. Fourth shelf . . . on the end.

[*PHILIP angrily bangs a box down on the counter.*]

OSCAR. My God! [*Startled, puts his hand over his heart.*] Thank you, thank you, sir! . . . On the end . . . [*Transported with joy.*] Very kind of you, sir! [*He is almost weeping.*] Fourth shelf . . . on the end. Thank you, sir!

DISSATISFIED LADY [*who has by this time accumulated a handful of neckties*]. That will be all. . . . Just these ten.

JUHASZ [*going to the cashier's desk*]. We will send them this afternoon, madame.

DISSATISFIED LADY. How much do I owe?

JUHASZ. Five times seven . . . and

five times five fifty. . . . Sixty-two fifty.

DISSATISFIED LADY [*gives him a hundred krone note*]. If you please.

JUHASZ [*has gone behind the cashier's desk*]. Sixty-two fifty. [*Rings the cash register, makes change.*] And fifty are sixty-three, ninety, one hundred. Thank you.

DISSATISFIED LADY. This afternoon without fail.

OSCAR [*raises his head*]. 16 Nador Street, Fourth Floor, Apartment 1.

DISSATISFIED LADY. That's right. Good day.

[*She exits. JUHASZ escorts her to the door, closes it after her, turns, glares at OSCAR and comes toward him slowly.*]

OSCAR [*watches him come, fearfully, as if he expected to have his ears boxed*]. One with blue stars, these with the white squares, and would you like these violet dots, and these with the very dainty circles, and these . . .

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Hold on. I only want three. Let me see.

[*He examines the socks. JUHASZ passes them slowly, and goes to the THOROUGH YOUNG LADY whom PHILIP is showing a bathrobe.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. It looks like a nightgown.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Put these three aside.

JUHASZ [*who is standing now between the two counters*]. Show the lady those hooded robes.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*rises*]. And now quickly, for I am late, a white cap, please.

OSCAR [*looks at JUHASZ*]. A white cap.

JUHASZ [*looks at OSCAR sternly*].
I'll get it for the gentleman.

[*He exits through the archway.*]

OSCAR [*crestfallen*]. The chief will bring it right in, sir. [*There is a pause. OSCAR rubs his hands.*] We have some very nice neckwear.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. I don't need any, thanks.

OSCAR. Tennis shoes?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Thank you, no.

OSCAR. Sport shirts?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*nervously*]. Don't need any. I need a white cap. Nothing else.

[*A brief pause.*]

OSCAR. Belts?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. No.

OSCAR [*with a furtive glance at PHILIP*]. Bathrobes? [*The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN shakes his head*]. White gaiters?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*sharply*]. Thank you, no! [*Rises.*] I asked for a white cap.

[*A brief pause.*]

OSCAR. Nice walking stick?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*crossly*]. No . . . A cap is what I asked for.

OSCAR [*offended*]. It will be here right away. [*Crosses to the table down left, takes a stick from the rack which stands there, flourishes it*]. This is a very unusual stick, sir.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. I said I didn't want one.

OSCAR. Yes, sir.

[*He flourishes the stick, demonstrating its lightness. The NERVOUS GENTLEMAN sullenly watches him balancing it, bending it, testing its suppleness.*]

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Let me see. OSCAR [*gives it to him*]. Light as a feather.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*balances and bends it*]. I don't need it. [*Returns it to OSCAR.*] I have more sticks now than I can use.

OSCAR. Just as you say, sir.

[*JUHASZ reënters with the cap.*]

JUHASZ. Here you are, sir. White flannel.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. That's right. [*Puts it with his other purchases.*] A dozen black socks, a dozen with clocks, these three figured ones, and the cap.

JUHASZ. Shall we send them?

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. 4 Sas Street . . . Lissauer. . . . With the bill.

JUHASZ [*makes a note of it*]. Yes, sir.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN [*pulls the stick out of OSCAR's hand*]. What does this stick cost?

OSCAR. Twenty-four kronen.

NERVOUS GENTLEMAN. Oh, put it on the bill too. Good day.

[*He exits with the stick.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. No monogram. Just two letters.

PHILIP [*writing*]. What letters?

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. R. S.

PHILIP. R. S.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. In white, please.

PHILIP. White letters.

OSCAR [*rushes off through the archway, calling to the bookkeeper*]. Charge Lissauer with twenty-four kronen more for a cane.

[*Simultaneously.*]

[JUHASZ *begins to replace the boxes on the shelves down right. PAULA enters from the street. She is very beautifully dressed.*]

PAULA. Good morning.

[*She comes slowly down to*

JUHASZ. PHILIP *looks up, stares at her in blank amazement.*]

JUHASZ [*pauses in the act of lifting a big box*]. Good morning.

[*There is a pause.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. And now let us go over them once more to see if they are all here. How many should there be?

PHILIP [*confused*]. Just as you say.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. *How many?*

PHILIP. Oh! How many? Forty-eight.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Let us count them over.

[*They count.*]

PAULA [*extends her hand to* JUHASZ]. How are you, Mr. Juhasz?

JUHASZ [*puts down the box*]. Thank you . . . very well. [*Extends his hand to her over the counter.*] Won't you sit down?

PAULA [*after a pause*]. I can hardly believe it is only two weeks since I saw you.

JUHASZ. That's not a very long time.

PAULA. No. [*She looks at him.*] I've come . . . I've come to buy a few things.

JUHASZ. How odd!

PAULA. Odd?

JUHASZ. For you to come here . . . as a customer.

PAULA. Yes, as a customer.

[*A pause.*]

JUHASZ. I shall be happy to give you satisfaction . . . as a customer. Perhaps . . . I ought to make things a bit cheaper for you.

PAULA. I don't want things cheaper, thank you. . . . Why do you look at me like that?

JUHASZ. You come in so . . . unexpectedly. . . . Have you got leave of absence?

PAULA. Oh, I'm not at Gerelypuszta any more. I'm back in town again. So is the Count. That is, he's at Monte Carlo just now.

JUHASZ. Monte Carlo. Great railway junction. Gambling casinos.

PAULA. No. He has gone there to shoot pigeons.

JUHASZ. He never used to like that kind of sport.

PAULA. He is passionately fond of it now. . . . Ever since you went away. When he hears that there is to be a slaughter of pigeons somewhere he rushes to the spot. . . . I was supposed to have gone to Monte Carlo with him, but I didn't.

JUHASZ. You didn't go.

PAULA. No. I had too many things to attend to at home first. [*Takes off her gloves, produces a list.*] There are so many things I want, and they are so hard to get here.

JUHASZ. Hard . . . here . . . Yes. . . . Very hard. [*There is a pause.*] And what is it you wish, Miss Paula?

PAULA [*sits, consults her list*]. You used to have some very fine French pajamas for ladies. How well I remember them! They are a hundred kronen the pair, aren't they?

JUHASZ. Yes.

PAULA. How many have you left?

JUHASZ. I still have them all. Eight pair.

PAULA. I'll take them all.

JUHASZ [*astounded*]. You?

PAULA. Yes, please. And to save time won't you get your pencil and take down my whole order? I want it sent . . . with the bill, as soon as possible, please. I shall be in town only a few days more. The address is 128 Andrassy Street.

JUHASZ [*writes*]. What apartment?

PAULA. The whole second floor.

JUHASZ [*writes, greatly bewildered*]. Eight pajamas. Whole second floor.

PAULA [*reads from her list*]. Twenty-four white neckties.

JUHASZ. For yourself?

PAULA. No, for my butler. I like him to wear a fresh tie every day.

JUHASZ [*writes; his voice trembles*]. Twenty-four white ties for butler.

PAULA. Twenty-four pair of white lisle gloves.

JUHASZ [*writes*]. For the butler?

PAULA. No, for my page boy.

JUHASZ [*writes*]. Page boy.

PAULA. And some gloves for myself. Those motoring gloves . . . with the ends like a funnel. . . . You know what I mean.

JUHASZ. Gauntlets.

PAULA. Gauntlets, yes.

JUHASZ [*writes disconsolately*]. Gauntlets.

PAULA [*sighs*]. Gauntlets.

JUHASZ. But . . . they are only worn for driving.

PAULA. I drive my own car.

JUHASZ [*sits down*]. A big car?

PAULA. It's standing out front. . . . Fifty horsepower.

JUHASZ. Fifty? [*Writes*]. Gauntlets. . . . How many pair? . . . Fifty?

PAULA. Six will be plenty until I get to Paris. I can buy more there if I need them. You can get everything in Paris.

JUHASZ. Yes. . . . You can get everything in Paris. . . . A wonderful city.

PAULA. But so far to motor to. . . . I'm afraid the journey will be tiresome.

JUHASZ. You won't be bored. . . . You probably aren't going alone. . . .

PAULA. Certainly not.

JUHASZ. Your mother?

PAULA. No. Mother is in Vienna, but from there she is going on to Wiesbaden to wait for us. We will pick her up on our way home.

JUHASZ [*earnestly, aroused*]. Is there anything the matter with your mother?

PAULA. Her health, you mean? No. She's only going to Wiesbaden to play cards. [*There is a pause. She reads from her list.*] Could you have a footman's cap made up for me quickly?

JUHASZ. Footman?

PAULA. I've been so annoyed about his cap. The one he brought with him was all covered with gold braid. He looked just like a hotel doorman. What I wish you'd get for me is something discreet and in good taste, something suitable for a private dwelling.

JUHASZ. A private dwelling.

PAULA. Yes. For a lady living alone.

JUHASZ [*tremblingly writes*]. Footman . . . cap . . . private dwelling. I'll look around at the cap-maker's.

PAULA. I shall be awfully obliged. [*She rises. There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ [*rises*]. Not at all. It's I who am obliged.

PAULA [*meets his eyes steadily*]. Why do you look at me so strangely?

JUHASZ [*looks down at his list*]. I'm pleased to see how clever you have been. . . . Butler, motor car, private dwelling, white gloves. I didn't know. . . .

PAULA. You didn't know?

JUHASZ. No.

PAULA. But . . . the whole city knows—

JUHASZ. Let us not talk about that, Paula. The important thing is that you are happy. Is his excellency well?

PAULA [*nervously*]. He is a perfect gentleman. One must say that for him.

JUHASZ. Certainly.

PAULA. After he had gone to the trouble and expense of buying and furnishing a whole house for me. . . . You probably know the place . . . that little mansion in Biedermeyer style that belonged to the late Count Schattenheim. . . .

JUHASZ. Yes. . . .

PAULA. He bought it for me and furnished it beautifully and then he had the tact to go off to Monte Carlo. And when he got there he sent me a thousand-word telegram.

JUHASZ. A thousand. That's a lot of words.

PAULA. A telegram to the effect that he had gone off because he didn't wish to influence my decision in any way. . . . I must be free to shape my own destiny, he said. . . . The mansion was mine . . . on the day that . . . of my own free will . . . I entered it. On the desk in my boudoir . . . he said . . . I would

find a telegram already written and addressed. It consists of a single word, "Come." . . . Twenty-eight hours after I send that telegram he will knock on my door. . . . So far . . . that is all that's happened. . . . Tactful of him, wasn't it?

JUHASZ. Very.

PAULA. That was ten days ago.

JUHASZ. Yes?

PAULA [*more and more nervously*]. I haven't sent the telegram yet.

[*There is a pause.*]

JUHASZ [*more and more calmly*]. I can imagine how eagerly he must be awaiting it.

PAULA. He said he would wait fourteen days. I have four days left. . . .

JUHASZ. From what you ordered here, I observe—

PAULA [*sharply*]. I haven't sent the telegram yet.

[*A pause.*]

JUHASZ. One needs time for everything.

PAULA. I have four days left. [*Nervously.*] And as the last day draws nearer . . . I have been wondering . . . because you have always been so good to me . . . what *you* would think about it.

JUHASZ. I should consider it very clever of you.

PAULA. Are you advising me to do it?

JUHASZ. I am reconciling myself to the idea.

PAULA. You . . . you would despise me, Mr. Juhasz, wouldn't you?

JUHASZ. How can you suppose such a thing?

PAULA. You see how . . .

JUHASZ. I see how clever you are. And how happy you will be.

PAULA [*sharply*]. I'll send it off . . . this afternoon.

JUHASZ. Then the Count ought to receive it to-night.

PAULA. Yes.

JUHASZ. I can imagine . . . how happy he will be.

PAULA. Yes. He loves me . . . very much.

JUHASZ. I know.

[*There is a pause. The PATIENT LADY enters.*]

PATIENT LADY. Good morning.

PHILIP. Good morning, madame. I'll be with you in a moment.

PAULA [*sulkily*]. I don't want to detain you. Good-bye, Mr. Juhasz.

[*She extends her hand. He takes it.*]

JUHASZ. Good-bye.

[*OSCAR enters through the archway. The PATIENT LADY goes to him.*]

PAULA. There is something I forgot.

JUHASZ. Yes?

PAULA. You used to have a certain French perfume.

JUHASZ. Yes.

PAULA. It seems to me it was called "Exquisite heure." A very strong, sensuous perfume. A perfume for bad women.

JUHASZ. Oh!

PAULA. At least you said only bad women would use it, and even they . . . only for . . . the most intimate occasions.

JUHASZ [*wincing*]. Yes, I have some left.

PAULA. I'll have a bottle, please. . . . Two bottles. . . .

JUHASZ. You are a bit cruel, Paula. You might at least have bought *that* somewhere else.

PAULA. I'd rather buy it here.

JUHASZ. As you like. [*To OSCAR.*] The lady wants some perfume. [*OSCAR takes his place.*] That penetrating stuff. . . . "Exquisite heure." [*Sharply.*] That perfume for harlots! [*To the PATIENT LADY.*] What can I show madame?

OSCAR. Yes, sir.

PATIENT LADY. I'd like to look at some scarfs, Mr. Juhasz. And a nice sweater.

JUHASZ. Shall we look at the sweaters first? [*Indicates the archway.*] Will you step in here, please?

[*She exits through the archway. He follows her. PAULA stares thoughtfully after them.*]

OSCAR [*shrilly*]. "Exquisite heure"?

PAULA [*starts*]. For mercy's sake . . . you?

OSCAR. It's me.

PAULA. Mr. Oscar! You here again?

OSCAR. I'm here, but I'm not Mr. Oscar any more. [*He goes quickly to the table down left, selects a bottle of perfume, gives it to her.*] "Exquisite heure."

[*Crosses right, behind the counter.*]

PAULA [*shakes her head*]. What are you doing here?

OSCAR [*cheerfully*]. My affairs didn't go so well.

PAULA. Where is Mrs. —?

OSCAR. She's my wife now.

PAULA. And Mr. Juhasz took you back? You must have begged him on your knees.

OSCAR. That wouldn't have done any good. You have to know how to handle him. There were a lot of

customers here, and I started right in waiting on one. Pure psychology! I know Mr. Juhasz backwards. . . . He hasn't got the heart to throw anybody out. . . . Is there anything else I can get you?

PAULA. No, thank you.

[*The OLD GENTLEMAN enters.*]

OLD GENTLEMAN. Good morning.

OSCAR. Good morning, professor. [*To PAULA.*] See you again. [*To the OLD GENTLEMAN.*] What can I do for you, sir?

OLD GENTLEMAN. I want a pair of inexpensive gloves.

OSCAR. Inexpensive. Yes, sir. What kind? Won't you sit down?

OLD GENTLEMAN. Swedish. Size nine and a half. Dark gray.

[*Sits at about the middle of the right counter.*]

OSCAR [*lays out a box*]. Dark gray. Swedish. Nine and a half. [*To PAULA, who is crossing slowly to the table down left.*] See you again some time. [*To the OLD GENTLEMAN.*] How do you like these?

[*Opens and expands a pair.*]

OLD GENTLEMAN. Are they Swedish?

OSCAR. Why, old Heinrich Ibsen himself wasn't as Swedish as these gloves are.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Ibsen was a Norwegian.

OSCAR. I said he wasn't as Swedish! Ha, ha!

[*Passes over the gloves. JUHASZ and the PATIENT LADY enter through the archway.*]

PATIENT LADY [*as she enters*]. Now about the scarfs.

JUHASZ [*comes down to the table*].

They are here, madame. [*Shows her one.*] They are quite new.

PATIENT LADY. I saw some like these at Braun's some time ago.

OSCAR. Not like those you didn't, madame, not like those! [*He is forcing a glove on the OLD GENTLEMAN'S hand.*] Now, push, push hard!

JUHASZ [*has passed to the end of the counter down right*]. Here are some in plain colors. [*Puts out a box.*] They are in much better taste. Sit down, please.

[*The PATIENT LADY sits at the counter. JUHASZ is behind it. PAULA, at the table down left, is looking at him sulkily.*]

OSCAR. Push, professor, push!

[*Helps him.*]

OLD GENTLEMAN. If I do it will burst.

OSCAR. Don't you care.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Better stretch it a bit more.

OSCAR. Let it burst, professor. A glove oughtn't to be stretched too much. It will go on your hand all right. [*Simultaneously.*]

JUHASZ. This dark green isn't bad. Or do you prefer this gray and black?

[*PAULA takes off her gloves. Then her hat. Throws them determinedly on the table. All look at her.*]

OSCAR [*loudly, quickly, to bridge the uncomfortable silence which ensues*]. Perhaps we had better take a half size larger, professor. Just one moment. . . .

PHILIP [*joins in loudly*]. This isn't expensive at all, if you consider the quality.
. . .

OSCAR. . . . to try this size. It doesn't matter if they fit a bit easy. Better that way than too snug.

PHILIP. You can't get quality without paying for it. We have a customer, an old gentleman, who always says "The cheapest is dearest in the long run." And he's quite right. I believe that if you. . . .

OSCAR. Or we will stick to the eight and a half if you like. They aren't so very tight. Some people prefer them that way. It's all a matter of taste.

JUHASZ [*joins in shrilly*]. This is pure lamb's wool and that makes it warmer than another scarf twice its weight. . . . And it's fashionable, too. . . . We carry all the plain colors, but the striped ones come only in two shades, gray against a black ground or . . .

[*Loudly and simultaneously.*]

[*Meantime PAULA has gone to the cashier's desk, glanced back at JUHASZ once more, and now, with a petulant stamp of her foot, she goes behind the desk. A sudden silence falls. She rolls up her sleeves and*

sits in the cashier's place. Her face is resolutely set. OSCAR, PHILIP and JUHASZ watch her, aghast.]

PHILIP. It is always a good plan to buy the best, for it gives the most satisfaction and lasts the longest. . . .

OSCAR. They may be uncomfortable for a day or two, but then they begin to conform to the shape of your hand, and you are glad you . . .

JUHASZ. You will find these very practical for cold weather. And they are ideal for skating in winter. Both men and women wear them. . . .

[*Simultaneously, softly, stammering; all begin at the same time.*]

[*He is greatly distressed; his voice trembles.*] We often sell several of these to the same customer . . . three or four at a time . . . even more . . . I recommend them highly, madame.

[*There is a pause. PAULA sits obstinately behind the cashier's desk.*]

OSCAR. Just push a little harder, please. [*He helps the OLD GENTLEMAN.*] Push, push!

PATIENT LADY. I'll take these three. What do they cost?

JUHASZ [*his voice trembles*]. Forty kronen each, madame.

PATIENT LADY [*rises*]. Send them, please. [*Fumbles in her purse.*] Three times forty. . . . One hundred and twenty.

JUHASZ. Yes. One hundred and twenty.

PATIENT LADY. After all, I think

two will be plenty. . . . Let me see which two.

[*They compare the scarfs.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY [*rises*]. What does it all come to?

[*She has money in her hand.*]

PHILIP. Three hundred and ten kronen, madame.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY [*turns toward the cashier's desk*]. Three hundred and ten.

[*She is about to go to PAULA.*]

PHILIP [*loudly, harshly*]. No, no! [*She turns to him in surprise.*] You can pay me, please.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. Not the cashier?

PHILIP [*with conviction*]. No.

[*She pays him.*]

PHILIP. Thank you, madame. Three hundred and ten. I'll get them out for you Thursday without fail.

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. I think that's everything. If I find I have forgotten anything I'll come in again to-morrow morning. Good day.

PHILIP [*sees her to the door*]. Good day, madame.

PAULA [*echoes his salutation, very loudly*]. Good day!

[*PHILIP gives her a disdainful glance and returns to the back counter where he begins to clear away.*]

PATIENT LADY. One is prettier than the other. . . . Oh, well, send the three of them. Three times forty . . . [*Takes out money.*] . . . makes one hundred and twenty.

JUHASZ [*uneasily*]. One hundred and twenty.

PATIENT LADY [*with a glance at PAULA*]. Do I pay the cashier?

JUHASZ [*very uncomfortable*]. Perhaps . . . it's all the same . . . you had better pay me.

PATIENT LADY [*puts the money down*]. One hundred and twenty.

JUHASZ. One hundred and twenty. Thank you, madame. [*Puts the money in his pocket.*] They will be delivered this afternoon.

PATIENT LADY. Thank you. Good day.

[*Goes to the door.*]

JUHASZ. Good day, madame.

PHILIP [*holds the door open for her*]. Good day.

PAULA [*emphatically, with a bow*]. Good day!

[*The PATIENT LADY exits.*]

PHILIP [*to PAULA, with an inflection of contemptuous amazement*]. Good day?

[*The ARISTOCRATIC LADY enters.*]

PAULA. Good day.

PHILIP [*very cordially*]. Good day.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*to PHILIP*]. What about my raincoat?

PHILIP. We are expecting it from Vienna any day, madame.

OLD GENTLEMAN [*takes the package which OSCAR has made up for him*]. What do I owe?

OSCAR. Twenty-four kronen.

OLD GENTLEMAN. I suppose you can change a thousand.

OSCAR [*hesitates, leans over the counter, looks from PAULA to JUHASZ, then calls*]. I . . . eh . . . a thousand? . . . Oh, Mr. Juhasz! The gentleman wants to know if we can change a thousand.

[*There is a painful silence.*]

PAULA [*rises, addresses the OLD GENTLEMAN sweetly*]. Certainly, sir.

OSCAR. Just a moment, sir.

[*The OLD GENTLEMAN, on the point of going to PAULA, pauses, in surprise.*]

JUHASZ [*in great perplexity*]. How much does the gentleman pay?

OSCAR [*leaning far out over the counter, looks from JUHASZ to PAULA then back again*]. Twenty-four.

JUHASZ [*after a short inward struggle*]. Cash! Twenty-four out of a thousand!

[*The OLD GENTLEMAN goes to PAULA; pays her.*]

PAULA [*ecstatically*]. Twenty-four out of a thousand. [*Rings the register loudly, opens the drawer.*] Twenty-four and six make thirty . . . fifty . . . one hundred . . . two . . . five . . . and five are one thousand. Thank you, sir.

OLD GENTLEMAN. Good day.

PAULA. Come and see us again.

OLD GENTLEMAN [*has gone to the door, counting his change, now turns*]. Look here! You gave me a hundred too much.

[*Returns a bank note to her.*]

PAULA [*in confusion*]. Oh, I beg your pardon.

OLD GENTLEMAN. That's all right. I never mind getting too much.

[*He exits, chuckling over his joke.*]

OSCAR [*has replaced the boxes on the shelves*]. No matter. Such things happen.

[*He goes out through the archway.*]

PHILIP [*to the ARISTOCRATIC LADY*]. Shall we look at the Burberrys?

JUHASZ [*to the ARISTOCRATIC LADY*]. That coat from Vienna should arrive to-night at the latest.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Am I mistaken? That man who just went in there. . . . Wasn't that . . . Oscar?

JUHASZ. Yes.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Is he back here again?

JUHASZ. He's . . . helping out.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*stares at PAULA*]. Helping out? . . . and . . . this is the young lady who used to be here, isn't it?

PAULA [*ironically sweet*]. Yes, madame, the same young lady.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. Come, Mr. Philip, let us look at the Burberry, and you can tell me all about it. [*Sees that JUHASZ is about to follow her.*] Don't you bother, Mr. Juhasz. We'll manage without you.

[*She and PHILIP exit through the archway. JUHASZ stands rigid, mute. A cabman enters from the street, whip in hand.*]

CABMAN. Beg pardon, lady. . . . Have you forgot me? You said I wouldn't have to wait long.

JUHASZ [*thrusts his hand in his pocket*]. How much do you get?

CABMAN. Three kronen.

JUHASZ. Here are six for you.

PAULA. Nothing of the kind. [*Opens the drawer of the register.*] Three kronen fifty are plenty. [*Gives the money to the CABMAN*]. There you are. [*The CABMAN looks at the money, then at JUHASZ and at PAULA.*] What are you waiting for?

CABMAN [*disappointed, surly*]. All right, all right. I'm going.

[*Gives her a withering glance and exits. There is a brief pause.*]

JUHASZ. What about the motor?

PAULA. That was it.

JUHASZ. Fifty horsepower.

PAULA. Only one horsepower.

JUHASZ [*goes to the cashier's desk*]. Then . . . the motor is in the garage?

PAULA. In the moon.

JUHASZ. That's far off.

PAULA. Far off.

JUHASZ. Shall I telephone now about the footman's cap?

PAULA. Don't bother. The footman has his cap.

JUHASZ. Has he?

PAULA. But he hasn't got a job.

JUHASZ. How's that?

PAULA. Because there is no mansion for him to work in. While I sat over there . . . [*Points to the counter.*] . . . there might have been.

JUHASZ. Gauntlets?

PAULA. Shan't need any.

JUHASZ. Twenty-four pair of white gloves.

PAULA. That's twenty-three too many. I do need one pair.

JUHASZ. One pair?

PAULA. For myself.

JUHASZ. Eight pair ladies' silk pajamas.

PAULA [*low, shyly*]. If you think I—

JUHASZ. You need them. [*Ar-
dently.*] Of course you need them.
. . . Perfume. . . "Exquisite heure."

PAULA. No, indeed!

JUHASZ. Yes. Three bottles.

PAULA. I hate the stuff.

JUHASZ. I adore it. It's the most beautiful scent on earth. Four bottles!

PAULA. If you like it so much . . . you may order a barrel.

[*There is a brief pause.*]

JUHASZ [*jealously*]. And . . . what about the telegram?

PAULA [*rises slowly*]. I wonder how it is . . . that some people can have such tender hearts and such very thick heads!

[*He hesitates a moment, then he*

◆ FASHIONS FOR MEN

takes her head in his hands and kisses her. PHILIP and the ARISTOCRATIC LADY *reënter.*]

PHILIP. Cash! Two hundred and forty. [*Shouts.*] Cash! Two hundred and forty.

[JUHASZ and PAULA *separate hastily.* JUHASZ *slinks bashfully down right.*]

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*she is carrying a package*]. How interesting! [*Goes to the cashier's desk.*] My husband is going to Wiesbaden. I hear your mother will be there, too.

PAULA. My mother is at home, madame, and intends to stay there.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*to PHILIP*]. But you told me—

PAULA. Idle gossip, madame. [*Points to the package.*] Are you paying for that now?

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. No. Charge it, please. As usual.

PAULA [*very curt and businesslike*]. Yes, madame. But we must ask you not to charge any more things here until your old account is settled. [*The ARISTOCRATIC LADY gasps.*] And about that old account. We must have a check by the first of the month or we shall be compelled to place it in our attorney's hands.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY. What's that you say?

[JUHASZ *makes a gesture of protest.*]

PAULA. In our attorney's hands. From to-day on we are inaugurating a new policy of extending credits for a limited period only.

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*furious*]. Mr. Juhasz, what do you say to this?

PAULA [*before JUHASZ can answer*]. Mr. Juhasz has nothing to say to it.

He has given me entire charge of the credit department.

[JUHASZ hangs his head.]

ARISTOCRATIC LADY [*indignantly*]. Good day.

PAULA. Good day.

[*The ARISTOCRATIC LADY sweeps indignantly out.*]

PHILIP and JUHASZ [*simultaneously*]. Good day.

PAULA. That settles her. And there are a few more like her I mean to attend to.

[*There is a pause.*]

OSCAR [*comes through the archway, a letter in his hand*]. Those waterproof coats haven't been ordered yet, Miss Paula. Shall I write and order some?

[*He puts the letter down on the desk before her.*]

PAULA. Oscar . . . I hope you understand that . . .

OSCAR [*grinning*]. I understand. I can take my hat and go.

[*Takes his cap out of his pocket.*]

PAULA. You guessed it.

OSCAR. Good-bye. Good-bye, everybody.

[*Makes a deep bow to each in turn.*]

JUHASZ. Take a dozen pair of socks before you go.

OSCAR [*jovially; taps his pocket*]. I have.

JUHASZ. Take two dozen.

OSCAR. I took three. Good-bye, Miss Paula.

[*He exits to the street.*]

PAULA [*calls sharply*]. Philip! [*Philip has been leaning resignedly against the shelves at back. Now he straightens up with a start, silently takes his hat and stick.*] No. You

aren't dismissed. [*She takes something out of her purse.*] What opera are they singing to-night?

PHILIP [*resentfully*]. "Lohengrin."

PAULA. You go off at six to-night . . . and take this with my compliments.

PHILIP [*looks at the ticket; joyfully*]. Parquet . . . eighth row.

PAULA. It was the best I could get.

JUHASZ [*beaming*]. Philip, you'll see the swan to-night.

[*The THOROUGH YOUNG LADY enters from the street.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. I knew I'd forget something. . . . I forgot to tell you that I don't want a period after each initial of the monograms on those handkerchiefs. . . . Just the letters without the periods.

PAULA [*graciously*]. Certainly, madame. We never have periods embroidered unless they are specially ordered.

PHILIP [*who has gone behind his counter*]. I'll make a note of it, madame, to be quite sure.

PAULA. Is there anything else you would like to-day? [*Comes around to the table.*] Are you interested in these girdles with antique silver buckles? They are just in from Paris.

[*She holds one up.*]

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. May I see?

PAULA. There are only a few, as you see, and they are selling very fast. So if you'd like one—

THOROUGH YOUNG LADY. I couldn't possibly afford one this month.

JUHASZ. That doesn't matter in the least, madame. Why, you can pay—

PAULA [*catches him up quickly, with unmistakable emphasis*]. For something cheaper, perhaps. Unfortunately we can't charge these girdles because we had to pay cash for them ourselves. They are not ordinary

merchandise, you see. They are made by a new atelier in Paris which—

[*As she speaks, and JUHASZ watches her, enchanted,*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

T H E S W A N

English text by
BENJAMIN GLAZER

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CHARACTERS

PRINCESS BEATRICE
SYMPHOROSA, *her sister*
HYACINTH, *her brother*
ALEXANDRA, *her daughter*
GEORG } *sons of Princess Beatrice*
ARSEN }
DR. HANS AGI
PRINCE ALBERT
PRINCESS MARIA DOMINICA
COUNT LUETZEN
COLONEL WUNDERLICH
COUNTESS SIBENSTEYN
CÆSAR
ALFRED
CHAMBERMAID
THE GOVERNOR'S WIFE
A LADY
HUSSARS, LACKEYS

The action takes place in the castle of the Princess Beatrice

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *A pavilion in the garden which serves as a classroom for the young princes. At left an open door through which the garden can be* | *seen, brilliant with sunlight. At right a glass door which leads into the other rooms. It is a summer afternoon. When the curtain rises Dr.*

AGI is lecturing to GEORG and ARSEN at a table. The boys are listening attentively.]

AGI. . . . After a series of humiliations and protracted physical sufferings he died on the island of St. Helena, on the fifth day of May, 1821, at the age of fifty-two. He was buried on a promontory of the island on which, in his lifetime, he had loved to sit and contemplate the sea. His faithful attendants wished to inscribe the word "NAPOLEON" on his gravestone. . . . But his tormentor, Hudson Lowe, persecuting him even beyond the grave, forbade it. The contemptible Hudson Lowe permitted them to inscribe only the words, "LE GENERAL BUONAPARTE." Later the body was conveyed to France in solemn state; and Paris honored the martyred emperor with magnificent funeral services. There, to this day, in the Dome des Invalides, raised high on a majestically simple bier of stone, he lies at rest. [*He has concluded the lecture. The boys are silent, impressed. AGI looks at his watch.*] That finishes our lesson for to-day. [*Closes the book.*] Have your highnesses any questions to ask?

ARSEN. Last night we had a dispute with mother. She hates Napoleon. She said he was a usurper.

AGI. That's one point of view.

GEORG. How do you mean?

AGI. Your highnesses are free to form your own opinions. For my part, I consider him a genius who made his power felt throughout the world.

GEORG. Is that your point of view?

AGI. Yes.

GEORG. Then it's mine, too.

ARSEN. That's what I call an independent opinion.

GEORG. So it is. . . . Not mine, but the professor's.

ARSEN. Mother was very angry.

AGI. With Napoleon?

GEORG. And with you.

AGI. What for?

GEORG. For not teaching us to hate Napoleon.

AGI. I present his story without bias of any sort.

ARSEN. We told mother that, but she thinks you ought to teach us to hate him.

GEORG. She says Napoleon is largely to blame for the dethronement of our family.

AGI. With all deference to her royal highness, that is a somewhat exaggerated view of the historical facts. Napoleon himself never altered the political status of your illustrious family. If any one can be blamed for it, it was the King of Württemberg.

GEORG. But the King of Württemberg was one of Napoleon's puppets.

AGI. Well, indirectly, there may be something in it. That is why I used the term exaggerated. And yet, if any one can profit by a study of the courage, the initiative and the luck of Napoleon, certainly, in my opinion, a dethroned sovereign family can. Doesn't his career teach us that thrones are not unattainable? He was only an obscure attorney's son. Now what he could attain, surely some one, who by right of birth—

ARSEN. Mother—

GEORG. Mother is sensitive on the subject of thrones just now, because Prince Albert is staying with us.

ARSEN. Mother has always been sensitive about thrones.

GEORG. Prince Albert is heir-apparent to a real throne. And when mother lays eyes on an heir-apparent, she loses her appetite.

ARSEN. Poor mother! No wonder. Her great-grandmother was a ruling sovereign. Mother can't be reconciled to the fact that that glory's forever ended.

GEORG. Forever?

AGI. Yes . . . probably. . . . Nowadays it is very difficult to—

ARSEN. But suppose the heir-apparent marries Alexandra.

GEORG. He won't marry her.

ARSEN. How do you know he won't? If he does marry her, Alexandra will be queen some day and we, as her family, will be attached to the Court. And if I know my mother, it won't be Albert who'll do the ruling.

GEORG. If he marries her!

ARSEN. He'll marry her.

GEORG. Why should he?

ARSEN. Because mother wants him to. And because we all want him to, —Aunt Symphorosa, Alexandra herself, I, you, the professor—

GEORG. I don't want him to marry her. Do you, professor?

AGI. Indeed . . . there is no station so exalted that her highness, the Princess Alexandra, would not grace it.

GEORG. Just the same, you don't want her to marry him.

AGI. I? Why do you say that?

GEORG. Because you spoke so coldly and formally.

AGI. I . . . I was surprised . . . that's all. It isn't easy to grasp . . . so suddenly. You see, during the few months in which I have been

attached to your illustrious family—if I may put it so—her highness, your sister . . . great lady though she is . . . has been very kind to me . . . to us all. Among other things, it has been my privilege to instruct her in fencing . . . and when I am suddenly called upon to think that my pupil is to wear the ermine . . . that she is to wear a crown . . . and sit upon a throne . . . Well . . . that's not an easy thing to—

GEORG. I'd be sorry to leave this place . . . it's so pleasant here. The Hungarians have been so good to us. But, if we had to leave, you'd come with us, wouldn't you?

AGI. If I were wanted.

ARSEN. I shouldn't mind going. Life at Court might be tiresome; but politics, they say, is exciting. Keeps you either trembling all the time . . . or laughing.

[BEATRICE and ALEXANDRA enter from the garden. All rise.]

BEATRICE. Finished your lesson, I see.

AGI. Yes, your highness. [ALEXANDRA stands silent and motionless down left.] We reached the death of Napoleon about ten minutes ago; and it seemed to me such an appropriate stopping place I didn't think it worth while to start a new chapter to-day.

BEATRICE [*sharply*]. An appropriate stopping place?

AGI. So I thought, your highness.

BEATRICE. A stopping place for the dead man, yes. But for us . . . merely a comma in an unfinished sentence. . . . Arsen! Georg! Prince Albert is coming to visit you here. He has expressed the wish to talk with you about your studies. I infer from what he said that he is particularly interested in history. Count

Luetzen, whom I consulted later, has confirmed that inference. Now go wash your hands and faces, comb your hair, and change your clothes.

ARSEN. When is he coming?

BEATRICE. As soon as he awakes.

GEORG. Is he asleep?

BEATRICE. I said, "As soon as he awakes." Which should have conveyed to you the information that he is now asleep.

GEORG. It did, mother. That's why I asked you.

BEATRICE. That remark is superfluous. Arsen, I hear you have been coughing.

ARSEN. No, mother; only once or twice.

BEATRICE. Symphorosa tells me you have been coughing. [*To AGI.*] Why haven't you reported it to me?

AGI. This morning his highness ate a green pepper and, despite my advice, neglected to remove the fibers. That is why he coughed. I didn't consider it serious enough to report to you.

BEATRICE. You couldn't possibly have known whether it was serious or not. You're not a doctor.

GEORG [*to ARSEN*]. That's what he gets for Napoleon.

BEATRICE. What did you say?

GEORG. Nothing, mother; I only coughed.

BEATRICE. And you, I hear, were riding like a wild man this morning.

GEORG. Did Symphorosa tell you that too?

BEATRICE. Unmannerly boy! What I asked you was, why have you been riding like a wild man?

GEORG. The horse was wild.

BEATRICE [*to AGI*]. Why didn't you report to me that the horse was wild?

AGI. The horse was tame before his highness got in the saddle.

BEATRICE. You couldn't possibly have known that. You are not the stable master.

GEORG. Then he couldn't have reported it, either.

BEATRICE. You are not to speak unless you are spoken to. Arsen will have his throat wrapped with wet towels to-night, and, beginning to-morrow, you will ride no other horse than Pretty.

GEORG. Pretty? Oh, mother!

BEATRICE. Silence! [*They are suddenly silent.*] I have a surprise for. You don't deserve it.

ARSEN. What is it?

GEORG. What?

BEATRICE. Guess.

ARSEN. Alexandra is going to be a queen.

[*Great embarrassment. Silence.*]

ALEXANDRA makes a startled movement.]

BEATRICE. Ill-mannered boy! How can you say such a thing? I forbid you even to think of such things. See here! I hope it isn't you who puts such ideas into the boys' heads.

AGI. Heaven forbid, your highness!

BEATRICE. Where then did you get that idea?

GEORG. Why, I told it to him.

BEATRICE. And where did you get it?

GEORG. I thought of it myself.

BEATRICE. What?

GEORG. Don't be angry because I can see things for myself, mother. I have eyes in my head.

BEATRICE. If his highness, Prince Albert, weren't coming here soon I'd punish you severely. But don't suppose that you'll get off so easily. [*To*

AGI.] And you might have reported to me that the boys occupy their minds with such things.

GEORG. He couldn't possibly have known. He's not a member of the family.

BEATRICE. You Robespierre! Out of my sight! [*Utter silence.*] Now I'll tell you the surprise. My brother Karl—that is—Father Hyacinth is here.

GEORG. Uncle Karl!

ARSEN. Oh, I'm so glad!

[*Both are wild with joy; ARSEN embraces AGI.*]

BEATRICE. Wild Indians!

ALEXANDRA. They're very fond of him, mother. I am glad he has come, too.

ARSEN. Glad! Professor, Uncle Karl is the nicest man in the world.

GEORG. He used to be a prince, and now he is in Holy Orders. A monk. Wears a cowl and a hood. And a scapulary.

BEATRICE. Those are mere externals. The essential thing is that he has a heart of gold and a brain of steel.

GEORG. So he has.

ARSEN. He renounced the world to enter an educational order.

AGI. Yes, your highness, I heard about it.

GEORG. But you never met him.

AGI. I have never had the honor.

GEORG. Well, you'll have the honor soon. . . . Mother, you couldn't possibly have brought us better news. Not even if you had come to tell us that Alexandra—

ALEXANDRA. Georg!

BEATRICE. I shan't forget to have you punished.

HYACINTH [*calling from the garden*]. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Ssh! Wasn't that some one calling?

HYACINTH [*from the garden*]. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Just as I thought! It's Hyacinth shrieking my name. His manners are appalling.

ARSEN. Uncle Hyacinth!

GEORG. Hyacinth! Hyacinth!

[*They are about to rush out to meet him.*]

BEATRICE. Stay where you are. [*Sudden silence.*] Indians! I'll meet him myself, else he'll go on shouting until he awakens Prince Albert.

[*BEATRICE goes out into the garden.*]

ALEXANDRA [*to AGI.*] My mother forgot to tell you that his highness, the Prince, will later witness the fencing exercises.

AGI. As your highness commands.

ALEXANDRA. The necessary orders have been given at the gymnasium. First there is to be sword practice between you and the boys, then they are to have a bout with the foils.

AGI. May I ask whether your highness is to take part?

ALEXANDRA. No.

[*There is a pause.*]

GEORG. Why not?

ALEXANDRA [*coldly*]. Because his highness particularly expresses his interest in *your* fencing. Are your costumes in proper condition?

AGI. Yes, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. How long will it take you and the boys to change?

AGI. Ten minutes will be plenty.

ALEXANDRA. I ask because the program has been rigidly fixed. When his highness has finished in here, he is to inspect my little rose garden, and from there he goes to the fencing exercises. The inspection of the garden

will take, I estimate, about fifteen minutes.

AGI. I deeply regret that your highness is not to show your skill in fencing.

ALEXANDRA. I had expected to take part. But if I am to show him the garden there won't be time for me to change.

AGI. May I take the liberty to ask whether some one else mightn't show his highness the rose garden?

ALEXANDRA. Why do you ask that?

AGI. Then your highness could change your costume and take part in the fencing instead.

ALEXANDRA [*coldly*]. And why fencing instead?

AGI. I only . . . thought . . . your highness fences so well . . . and gracefully . . . and—

ALEXANDRA. And?

AGI. And any one can show him the garden.

ALEXANDRA. Thank you. I am quite aware of that.

AGI. I beg your pardon, your highness. It's the pride of the teacher that prompts me to speak.

ALEXANDRA. The program is not regulated to suit your pride. And, in any case, I have no need of your advice on the subject.

[*Raises her chin a bit imperiously.*]

AGI. As your highness commands.

[*There is a brief pause.*]

GEORG. May I say something?

ALEXANDRA. Well?

GEORG. The professor is right.

[*He goes to the door as voices are heard outside.* HYACINTH and BEATRICE enter.]

ARSEN AND GEORG [*rushing to greet* HYACINTH]. Uncle Hyacinth! Hyacinth!

ARSEN. Welcome!

GEORG. How long are you going to stay?

HYACINTH. Now, now, now, not so boisterously.

[*Draws back playfully.*]

BEATRICE. Indians!

GEORG. How long are you going to stay?

HYACINTH. I've scarcely arrived, and here you are asking me when I depart.

GEORG. Because we want you to stay a long time.

HYACINTH. It's a long time since I've seen you. [*Embraces each in turn.*] Let me look at you. Splendid color! [*Feels their arms.*] And muscle too, eh?

GEORG. How long are you going to stay?

HYACINTH. Not long, I'm sorry to say. [*Approaches AGI, who bows low.*] And this is your tutor, Mr. Agi, of whom I have heard so much. [*Shakes hands with him.*] Beatrice writes me excellent reports about you. I hear you are not only a good teacher but also an accomplished athlete. You row and fence . . .

ARSEN. And ride.

HYACINTH. That's splendid. And are you very fond of him, boys?

GEORG [*earnestly*]. Oh, yes, Uncle Hyacinth.

HYACINTH. Good! And you? Are you satisfied with your pupils?

AGI. Entirely, your royal highness.

HYACINTH. No, professor, not highness. Only an humble servant of Christ.

AGI. I beg your pardon, Father.

HYACINTH. Oh, you mustn't blush about it. Else I shall reproach myself for having mentioned it. But

then it's so charming of a doctor of philosophy to blush. I feel we're good friends already. [*Shakes his hand again.*] I congratulate you on your method. Culture seasoned with athletics—that's the ideal curriculum.

BEATRICE. Hyacinth is such a confirmed pedagogue, the teacher interests him more than the pupils.

HYACINTH. Quite so, my dear. Some day, when it's raining hard and we have nothing better to do, I'll explain to you why, for the good of the child, one should look first into the teacher's head. Well, boys, what have you learned to-day?

ARSEN. We finished Napoleon to-day.

[*Glances at BEATRICE. There is an awkward pause.*]

HYACINTH. Mother doesn't care much for Napoleon, eh?

BEATRICE. No.

GEORG. Last night we had a dispute about—

ALEXANDRA. Now, Georg, don't begin that all over again.

HYACINTH. Why not? Tell me, what was the dispute about?

ARSEN. Mother thinks people should be taught to hate Napoleon.

GEORG. Especially our family.

HYACINTH. And what do you think?

AGI. I presented the story of Napoleon without bias of any sort.

HYACINTH. My dear fellow, then come with me and let me introduce you to the Historical Congress at London as one of the world's wonders. There is no neutral ground where Napoleon is concerned. One either hates him or loves him.

GEORG. He loves him, but he won't admit it.

HYACINTH. Why won't he admit it?

AGI. I have tried to let their highnesses form their own opinions about him. Nevertheless, I *have* pointed out to them Napoleon's initiative, his courage . . . and his luck.

HYACINTH. Quite right. If any one can profit by studying Napoleon's career, the young people of this family can. . . . My dear fellow, you're blushing again.

GEORG. Because a little while ago he said the same thing, almost word for word.

HYACINTH. Ah, well, that doesn't prove it. But if we are in error, my friend, at least there are two of us.

BEATRICE. Time for you to get ready. [*To HYACINTH.*] Prince Albert will be here to visit them shortly.

HYACINTH. Then off with you. See you later, professor.

[*AGI bows and exits with the boys.*]

BEATRICE. No matter what you say, I insist that the man was a usurper.

HYACINTH. What man?

ALEXANDRA. Mother never utters his name.

HYACINTH. Sorry. I had forgotten.

[*SYMPHOROSA enters from the garden.*]

SYMPHOROSA. He is asleep.

HYACINTH. Who?

BEATRICE. The Prince. [*To SYMPHOROSA.*] On which side is he lying?

SYMPHOROSA. Wait a moment. [*Reflects.*] On his right side.

BEATRICE. Then he is not lying on his heart.

SYMPHOROSA. No . . . on his liver.

BEATRICE. That's good. Now go back to your post, Symphorosa; keep careful watch and report everything to me.

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, dear.

[*She exits into the garden.*]

HYACINTH. Does my sister Symphorosa keep watch over the Prince's slumbers?

BEATRICE. Yes, she is in constant touch with the adjutant who, on his part, peeps through the keyhole.

HYACINTH. And that goes on all day long?

BEATRICE. I have to keep informed about everything; he is my guest. That is no light responsibility.

HYACINTH. And how long has he been here?

BEATRICE. Four days.

HYACINTH. How much longer is he staying?

BEATRICE. According to program, he goes to-morrow. That's why I wanted you here sooner. He arrived unexpectedly, and here we were without a man.

HYACINTH. I started immediately I got your telegram. Albert has changed, hasn't he? He has become quite an attractive young man.

[*He sits.*]

BEATRICE. He is very agreeable.

HYACINTH. He appeared genuinely glad to see me. He almost wept when we met.

BEATRICE. He was very fond of my lamented husband, too. And he was only a child then.

HYACINTH. He embraced me cordially and kissed me at least four times. And he fairly beamed when he told me how much he loved you all.

BEATRICE. That's just it.

HYACINTH. What's "just it"?

BEATRICE [*to ALEXANDRA*]. Will you go out into the garden a while, my dear?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, mother.

[*She exits into the garden.*]

BEATRICE *dries her eyes.*

HYACINTH. What's wrong, my dear? Has anything happened?

BEATRICE [*her glances following ALEXANDRA through the door out to the garden*]. I didn't care to speak of it in her presence. But that's just it. Nothing has happened.

HYACINTH. I don't understand.

BEATRICE. Albert told you how much he loved us all.

HYACINTH. Yes.

BEATRICE. Well, he has fallen in love with every one here . . . except Alexandra.

HYACINTH. What did you expect in three days?

BEATRICE. Not love, perhaps . . . but at least some sign of interest in the girl. But no. Not the slightest advance. Though we did everything we could.

HYACINTH. Perhaps . . . there are . . . political reasons . . .

BEATRICE [*with a smile*]. You underestimate me, Karl.

HYACINTH. Forgive me . . . I know you are the best informed woman in Europe.

BEATRICE. I'll show you my correspondence. Oh, I have no illusions on the subject. I know perfectly well that the only reason they are considering a marriage with us is because two or three royal families have made simultaneous advances and they can't afford to offend any of them.

HYACINTH. I see.

BEATRICE. And that is what makes me so anxious, Karl. The Czar wants him for Olga—Constantine's

daughter. Edward would have liked to get him for England—for Patricia. Frederic has been telegraphing me every day from Vienna, and Amelie from St. Petersburg.

HYACINTH. So Albert must make up his mind quickly.

BEATRICE. Rome is out of the question for him. And so it is imperative for him to choose a wife immediately.

HYACINTH. Then he'll go to Montenegro.

BEATRICE. That is just what I am afraid of. He is a very obedient son. Dominica, his mother, dominates him utterly. And she has sent him everywhere. First to Dresden for Leopoldine Charlotte, but he didn't like her. She tends to corpulence. From there he went to Portugal for the Infanta Silvina Gonzaga. A most admirable girl, but incredibly ugly. So on he went to Belgium, to Maria Hermine, who is two heads taller than he is— And he rightly decided that such an alliance would make him look ridiculous in his people's eyes. And now he is here. And if we let him get away from us his next stop will undoubtedly be Montenegro.

[*Dries her eyes.* SYMPHOROSA *enters from the garden.*]

BEATRICE. Well?

SYMPHOROSA. He stretched his hand outside the bed.

BEATRICE. What for?

SYMPHOROSA. For his lemonade.

BEATRICE. Was the lemonade there?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, he drank it.

BEATRICE. I was so afraid it mightn't have been there! And then?

SYMPHOROSA. Then he turned over and went to sleep again.

BEATRICE. Thank you, dear.

SYMPHOROSA. Not at all, dear.

[SYMPHOROSA *hurries off.*]

BEATRICE [*unhappily*]. These past three days have been a great trial to me, Karl. I am absolutely certain that he is here on account of Alexandra. And yet he has treated the girl as if she didn't exist. And not a word, not a sign from his mother, Dominica. If he had serious intentions, she'd be here by this time.

[*Weeps.*]

HYACINTH. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. I am not myself. Think of it, we have only one day more. This afternoon, the ball tonight, and . . . if nothing happens . . . then our chances are gone, perhaps forever.

HYACINTH. And not a sign?

BEATRICE. Not one. I needn't tell you how I have watched for one.

HYACINTH. Perhaps Alexandra is—

BEATRICE. She is perfectly beautiful and clever and self-possessed . . . her poor father described her perfectly when he called her his swan. "My proud, white swan!" . . . And she is just like that—majestic, silent, earnest . . . holds her head high . . . conducts herself irreproachably. Yet Albert is utterly indifferent to her. It's disheartening!

HYACINTH. Beatrice, it is not like you to lose control of yourself like this.

BEATRICE [*nervously*]. I know, but I can't help it. This is my last great battle; not mine alone but our family's. Now or never. Well, I mean to win if I ruin myself in the attempt.

[SYMPHOROSA *speaks in the doorway.*]

SYMPHOROSA. He is sleeping peacefully.

BEATRICE. Thank you, dear.

[SYMPHOROSA *vanishes*.]

HYACINTH. You mustn't agitate yourself like this. What will be, will be. And if it isn't successful this time, it will be next time.

BEATRICE. When? Albert is thirty-five. And Alexandra isn't getting younger.

HYACINTH. How old is she?

BEATRICE. . . . and twenty.

HYACINTH. What . . . and twenty?

BEATRICE. Nothing. Just "and twenty."

HYACINTH. That is a new number.

BEATRICE. Yes, my dear. I invented it myself. A mother's invention.

HYACINTH. I see. So she is just "and twenty."

BEATRICE. But she can't stay that way indefinitely. She is ripening. In a political family that wouldn't matter. But our daughters must be beautiful. My conscience has troubled me for making the poor girl wait as long as she has.

HYACINTH. One can't blame you for that. You are a devoted mother, my dear. But you are aware that our lives are ordered not for the individual's but for the family's good. The happiest royal family may be composed of unhappy individuals.

BEATRICE. Poor Xara.

HYACINTH. Who is that?

BEATRICE. Alexandra!

HYACINTH. Is that what you call her now?

BEATRICE [*to SYMPHOROSA, who is entering*]. Well?

SYMPHOROSA. The situation is unaltered.

[*She exits.*]

BEATRICE. Karl, I want you to help us.

HYACINTH. I? But, my angel, what can I do?

BEATRICE. You, with your charming personality—

HYACINTH. But, my dear child, it isn't me you want him to marry.

BEATRICE. Oh, you—man! Don't you understand that everything attractive in the setting adds luster to the girl?

HYACINTH. What does Alexandra think of the matter?

BEATRICE. Just as I do.

HYACINTH. Has she said anything about it?

BEATRICE. No, but she is worried. [SYMPHOROSA *enters quickly, her hand held agitatedly to her heart.*] Well?

SYMPHOROSA. He is awake. [BEATRICE *makes a gesture of displeasure.*] Count Luetzen coughed outside his door.

BEATRICE [*quickly aghast*]. Accidentally?

SYMPHOROSA. No, on purpose.

BEATRICE. Wasn't the Colonel on guard?

SYMPHOROSA. Certainly. Count Luetzen came to the door expressly to cough.

BEATRICE. Why didn't the Colonel cough himself?

SYMPHOROSA. Because his cough is too loud. Count Luetzen coughs delicately. He always coughs his highness awake.

BEATRICE. What happened when he awoke?

SYMPHOROSA. He asked for Eau de Cologne.

BEATRICE. Yes.

SYMPHOROSA. And a cup of weak tea.

BEATRICE. Yes.

SYMPHOROSA. Now don't be alarmed, dear. He got everything he asked for.

BEATRICE. And when is he coming to see the boys?

SYMPHOROSA. I forgot to ask.

BEATRICE [*excitedly*]. How could you? Hurry! Run! [SYMPHOROSA *goes out swiftly*.] She had to forget the most important thing of all! Heavens, and I am sure the boys aren't ready yet.

[*Starts off at right*.]

HYACINTH [*restraining her*]. This won't do, my dear. Calm yourself; don't be over-anxious. Everything will be all right. The boys must have been ready long ago. . . . Really, dear . . . this isn't a bit like you. You always had such poise, such assurance—

BEATRICE. In times of peace, yes. But this is war! I'll go to meet him. You call the boys. My God—

HYACINTH. Calm yourself!

BEATRICE. Now, Karl, you only make me more nervous, talking like that. Can't you see I'm in the fever of the last hope . . . the finish of the race? . . . Now I must summon my last reserves of strength. . . . To arms . . . To arms . . . To arms!

[SYMPHOROSA *enters breathlessly*.]

SYMPHOROSA. He's coming!

BEATRICE. When?

SYMPHOROSA. Now.

BEATRICE. Immediately?

SYMPHOROSA. Immediately, immediately! He has started already! I ran on ahead.

BEATRICE. Let's go to meet him.

[*Hurries into the garden*. SYMPHOROSA *follows her*.]

HYACINTH [*calls through the door-*

way at right]. Well, aren't you ready yet?

[*The boys and AGI enter*.]

GEORG. We're ready. We've been waiting.

ARSEN. Is he coming?

HYACINTH. He'll be here any minute. [*To AGI*.] Tell me, my son, have you altered your opinion about Napoleon since our discussion?

AGI. No.

HYACINTH. And suppose my sister requests you to teach Napoleon according to her ideas.

AGI. Then I shall try to convince her highness—

HYACINTH. And if her highness still insists?

AGI. Then I shall regretfully take my leave.

HYACINTH. Shake hands. [*Shakes his hand*.] Now I know you better than I did a half hour ago.

GEORG [*who has been standing at the garden door, looking out*.] They're coming!

HYACINTH. You stay here. I'll go to meet them.

[*Exits into the garden*.]

AGI [*at the table*]. We will stand here . . . around the table . . . at the places where we always sit. Prince Arsen there, Prince Georg there, I here. And your highness, Georg, if you really meant what you said before about being fond of me—

GEORG. Don't worry. I'll be good.

AGI. Just this once. If you behave well, I'll take you up to the observatory to-night.

ARSEN [*joyfully*]. The observatory.

AGI. We'll have a look at Capella and Vega, and I'll explain the entire summer firmament to you.

GEORG. I'll be gentle as a lamb.

[*There is a brief pause during which voices are heard in the garden.* PRINCE ALBERT appears first. He is young, elegant, gracious. He wears a general's uniform. He enters, chatting with HYACINTH. After them come BEATRICE, SYMPHOROSA, ALEXANDRA, LEUTZEN, WUNDERLICH. All take positions before the chairs where they will later sit.]

ALBERT [*very good-humoredly, continuing a speech begun outside*]. . . and, being a soldier, his cough is so incisive, so intrepid, so abrupt that . . . really, you know, it wakes one with a start. But Luetzen, on the other hand, Luetzen is a diplomat. He can cough delicately and melodiously and suitably to every occasion. Luetzen can cough for you in such a discreet, persuasive crescendo that you wake gradually and without shock. Curious that personal peculiarities should extend even to such things. Keen observation, what? Human. *C'est humain.* [*Looks around.*] *Eh, bien!* Hello, you dear little boys. [*To AGI, who bows profoundly.*] Good morning! This would be the brilliant young professor. What? [*A pause.*] Why don't you sit down?

[*He sits. The others sit simultaneously.*]

BEATRICE [*ingratiatingly*]. Did you rest well?

ALBERT. It is really astonishing how well I sleep here. I don't know whether it's the fresh air, or that excellent bed, or the pleasant surroundings that soothe and refresh me so. A perfect balm to my nerves . . . really

I am quite happy here. You may laugh, but it's true that I shall never forget the days I have spent with you here. Dear Béatrice . . . who thinks of everything for my comfort . . . this fine old castle, this gently rolling landscape, the peace, the harmony of the life you live here. . . . Oh, I . . . All I can say is that I have fallen in love with you.

BEATRICE [*sweetly*]. We are very happy, Albert, to know that you are enjoying your visit.

SYMPHOROSA [*sweetly*]. We have no other aim, Albert.

ALBERT. At night, when I am alone, Beatrice, I think of my poor father and your sainted husband . . . Henry. . . . How often they strolled together in this garden!

BEATRICE. Talking about their children.

ALBERT. They both were devoted fathers. They dedicated their lives to the welfare of their children.

BEATRICE. They never tired of discussing their children, you know. Always the children. The future of the children. What would become of them. How to direct them in the right path. [*Turns, chair and all, toward ALBERT; speaks with emphasis.*] How some day the children would rear a family of their own.

ALBERT [*to HYACINTH*]. Sometimes at night I lean out of my window and fancy I see the two old men walking arm in arm along the path between those banks of beautiful roses—

BEATRICE [*edging her chair nearer ALBERT*]. They are Alexandra's roses.

[*A pause.*]

ALBERT. How? *Your* roses?

ALEXANDRA. Mine, yes.

ALBERT. Did you plant them?

ALEXANDRA. Only some of them.
But I tend them.

[*A pause.*]

ALBERT. And . . . does that amuse you?

ALEXANDRA. Oh, yes.

[*A pause.*]

ALBERT. And . . . don't you ever prick yourself?

ALEXANDRA. Sometimes.

[*A pause.*]

ALBERT. Why don't you wear gloves?

ALEXANDRA. I usually do.

ALBERT. And . . . yet you prick yourself?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, through the gloves.

[*A pause.*]

ALBERT. You ought to wear thicker gloves.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, I must try thicker ones.

ALBERT. *C'est ça!* That's life. One must be on one's guard.

BEATRICE. That's perfectly true! How good of you to be interested. Fancy! Such practical advice, too!

ALBERT [*modestly*]. Oh, not at all . . . only . . . you see . . . one picks up a bit of experience here and there . . . what? [*A pause, and then he rises suddenly. They all stand up.*] Well now, let's have a look at the boys. Is this your classroom?

ARSEN. Yes.

ALBERT. You are sixteen, aren't you?

ARSEN. Yes.

ALBERT. And you are seventeen?

GEORG. Yes.

ALBERT. Time flies. They are popping up fast, what?

BEATRICE. Indeed, yes, Albert.

ALBERT. You doubtless suppose that I shall examine you, like a school inspector.

GEORG. No, we don't.

ALBERT. Have no fear . . . I am a proper uncle. I shall only question your excellent young teacher.

BEATRICE [*to SYMPHOROSA*]. He is falling in love with him, too.

HYACINTH. I commend him warmly to your notice. He is a man of culture and an athlete; an astronomer and a swordsman.

ALBERT [*notices that they all are standing*]. Why don't you keep your seats? [*HYACINTH, ALEXANDRA, BEATRICE and SYMPHOROSA sit; the others do not.*] Good. I like that. It's the modern spirit. What are you working on now?

AGI. History, your highness.

ALBERT. Ah! That's always interesting. What period?

AGI. The beginning of the nineteenth century.

ALBERT. Napoleon.

AGI. Yes, your highness.

[*Embarrassment.*]

ALBERT. You are interested in pedagogy, aren't you, Karl?

HYACINTH. Yes.

ALBERT. Did you know that Napoleon proposed to establish a school for kings at Meudon?

HYACINTH. A very practical idea.

ALBERT. Yes, the pupils were to have been limited to boys in the line of succession to a throne. The program of study was very interesting. No details at all. General instruction along broad lines. No science, only orientation; no theory, only practice. Las Cases writes about it in his memoirs.

HYACINTH. He was the only one who could have made it practical.

ALBERT. Yes, yes, he could have made many things practical. A capital idea, too! A school from which you graduated with a monarch's diploma in hand. [*He laughs. The others respectfully echo his laugh. ALBERT looks around him.*] Well! . . . I'm glad to find you such fine healthy boys. Nice, deep-set eyes this chap has, what?

BEATRICE [*rises*]. Exactly like Alexandra's. It is marvelous how alike their eyes are. He resembles her in many ways.

ALBERT [*taking no notice of her remark*]. You oughtn't read too much, my boy. That's bad for the eyes. Sailors have the nicest eyes because they are accustomed to look upon vast distances. At the sea and sky.

HYACINTH. He'd like that. He wants to be a sailor.

ALBERT. And you?

ARSEN. I? An explorer.

ALBERT. Where?

ARSEN. The Pole.

ALBERT. Which Pole, my son?

ARSEN. The South Pole.

ALBERT. You are mistaken if you suppose it's any warmer there than at the North Pole. [*He laughs.*] And when do you start?

BEATRICE [*puts her arms about ARSEN*]. He starts this very moment with Georg to put on his fencing things. Uncle Albert wants to see how well you fence.

ALBERT. Indeed, yes, I am very much interested. [*The boys bow.*] See you later. [*To AGI.*] You too, what?

AGI. Yes, your highness, in the gymnasium.

ALBERT. Do you teach them fencing, too?

AGI. Yes, your highness.

ALBERT. Splendid! You are versatile, aren't you? See you later.

[*AGI and the boys exit.*]

ALBERT [*sits*]. He has a very tactful and sympathetic manner, this tutor. I am charmed with him.

HYACINTH. I liked him the moment I laid eyes on him.

ALBERT. And such a handsome young fellow.

BEATRICE [*to SYMPHOROSA*]. I told you he'd fall in love with him.

SYMPHOROSA. Don't be upset about it, I beg of you.

ALBERT. Hah! [*Rises suddenly.*] And while we are waiting for the great fencing competition . . .

BEATRICE. We can show you a number of things worth seeing. Now if you are interested in beautiful roses, there is Alexandra's own little rose-garden—

[*ALEXANDRA rises.*]

ALBERT. Oh, yes.

BEATRICE [*sweetly*]. The roses are her pride and joy . . . and there are some rare specimens among them.

ALBERT [*without enthusiasm*]. Splendid!

[*His eyes seek out WUNDERLICH.*]

WUNDERLICH [*comes forward*]. Your highness may be interested in . . . the new dairy I saw here yesterday. An absolutely modern innovation. They milk the cows by vacuum.

ALBERT. By vacuum?

WUNDERLICH. Yes, your highness.

ALBERT. Like sucking up dust from a carpet?

WUNDERLICH. Exactly. It is most interesting.

ALBERT. But that sounds fantastic. One really must look at it. I have

never seen anything like that before. [ALEXANDRA *sits down*.] And did you have it installed yourself, Aunt Beatrice?

BEATRICE. I installed it as an experiment.

ALBERT. You are really a remarkable woman.

BEATRICE. If I may say so, Albert, the dairy is quite far from here.

ALBERT. All the better. We need a little exercise.

BEATRICE. As you please. We'll go to the dairy, then.

ALBERT. Oh, no . . . I shouldn't think of troubling *you* to come with me. I'll go with Luetzen and the Colonel. We'll make it a brisk walk.

HYACINTH. If you permit, I'll join you.

ALBERT. No, I can't have that. My sight-seeing needn't inconvenience any of you.

HYACINTH. But—

ALBERT. No, no— [*Starts to go*.] You mustn't feel obliged to run about with me as though I were a stranger. Forward march, Luetzen. Coming, Colonel? When they are ready at the gymnasium send some one after us.

[*He is in the doorway at left*.]

BEATRICE. I'll telephone.

ALBERT. But we shall probably be among the cows.

BEATRICE. Yes, I know.

ALBERT. Is there a telephone there?

BEATRICE. In every stall.

ALBERT. You really are a wonderful woman. Incredible! [*There is a pause; then he says suddenly*.] Adieu!

[*Exits quickly into the garden with LUETZEN and WUNDERLICH. There is another painful*

and dejected silence. BEATRICE sits down, despairingly. ALEXANDRA, greatly offended, exits at right.]

HYACINTH. Well, he disposed of the rose-garden very neatly.

BEATRICE [*rises*]. What did I tell you? Could anything have been more pointed? You heard that Colonel. I scarcely got the rose-garden out of my mouth when he came forward with the cows.

HYACINTH. A coincidence.

BEATRICE [*heatedly*]. Was it? Well, I shan't be beaten by such a coincidence.

HYACINTH. I observed that your first attempts in that direction were without conspicuous success.

BEATRICE. I shan't give up as long as there is a ray of hope, an hour of time left.

SYMPHOROSA. What are you going to do now?

BEATRICE. There is only one way left.

SYMPHOROSA. What way?

BEATRICE. Only one. A terrible way.

SYMPHOROSA. You alarm me, Beatrice.

BEATRICE. Yes, you may well be alarmed. For what I propose to do is so reprehensible that, if any one else did it, I'd despise her all my life.

HYACINTH. What in heaven's name are you thinking of?

BEATRICE. God will forgive a mother anything she does for her child. And a widow what she does for the welfare of her family. [*She faces HYACINTH with tears in her eyes*.] You will forgive me.

HYACINTH. I have forgiven you already, but tell me what you mean to do.

SYMPHOROSA. I know you, Beatrice. When you start talking in that strain there is only one bit of advice I can give you. Don't do it.

BEATRICE. You will be good enough to hold your tongue. The whole difficulty lies in the fact that Albert's interest in the girl had not been aroused. His interest—as a man.

SYMPHOROSA. Merciful heaven!

BEATRICE. Why? Does it begin so shockingly?

HYACINTH. Rather disquietingly.

BEATRICE. Well, be prepared for worse. There are certain grounds beyond which Alexandra may not go. Alexandra can't flirt with him, for instance.

SYMPHOROSA. I am beginning to be reassured.

BEATRICE. Alexandra can't . . . throw herself at him.

SYMPHOROSA. Thank God for that.

BEATRICE. She wouldn't be capable of such a thing, and if she were, my pride wouldn't permit it.

HYACINTH. Well, then?

BEATRICE. A man's interest in a woman . . . can best be aroused . . . through the attentions of another man.

SYMPHOROSA. How shocking!

HYACINTH. Not yet. But it begins most curiously. Go on.

BEATRICE. Once Albert is made to see the woman in Alexandra, the rest will be easy for us. We have no time to lose. He goes to-morrow. . . . And he seems to have taken a fancy to the tutor.

HYACINTH. Ah!

SYMPHOROSA. Beatrice!

BEATRICE [*greatly excited*]. Be still! Do you think I am in the mood to consider your petty prejudices now?

HYACINTH. And what is it you propose to do with the professor?

BEATRICE. Invite him to the ball to-night.

SYMPHOROSA. The world will come to an end.

BEATRICE. And Alexandra will show him marked attention.

SYMPHOROSA. That . . . that . . . is worthy of Machiavelli's brain.

BEATRICE. It would never have occurred to me if Albert hadn't praised the professor. It was he who put the plan into my head. And it can't fail. A rival of his own rank might leave him quite indifferent . . . but a mere tutor . . . that is irresistible.

SYMPHOROSA. I shan't live through it.

BEATRICE. I command you to live through it. Alexandra will be attentive to the tutor . . . and . . . and Alexandra will dance a quadrille with the tutor. And God will forgive me, and God will forgive Alexandra. And I shall never forgive the tutor.

HYACINTH. For what?

BEATRICE. For putting me under obligation to him.

SYMPHOROSA [*indignantly*]. Alexandra mayn't flirt with the Crown Prince, but she may flirt with a tutor.

BEATRICE [*dryly*]. That is quite different. It's like flirting with your horse.

SYMPHOROSA. Karl, how can you listen to such dreadful proposals and be silent?

HYACINTH. They are not dreadful proposals. They are mere feminine manœuvres which are not as considerable as you suppose. There is something else I am considering.

BEATRICE. What?

HYACINTH. The poor tutor.

BEATRICE. What has the tutor got

to do with it? No one's harming him.

HYACINTH. Tell me, my dear, has Alexandra ever taken particular notice of the tutor before?

BEATRICE. How can you ask such a thing?

HYACINTH. That means she hasn't. And what do you suppose will happen, my dear, if she suddenly takes notice of him now—

BEATRICE. Oh, you needn't be afraid it will inspire the fellow with any false hopes; I'll see to that.

HYACINTH. I'm not so sure. The tutor is young and temperamental. I admit I have no eye for such things any more, but just now, when I saw them together, it seemed to me that the young man looked at Alexandra respectfully, yet adoringly. As a cat might look at a canary in its cage, respecting it, yet . . . longing to devour it.

BEATRICE. You are not trying to suggest that he is in love with her?

HYACINTH. No. But certainly his interest is aroused.

BEATRICE. What of it?

HYACINTH. Only that it seems unjust to play with the young fellow in that fashion, and then cast him aside.

BEATRICE. Am I to understand that your sympathies are on the side of the tutor?

HYACINTH. My sympathies are on the side of the humanities.

BEATRICE. The possible disappointment of a mere tutor concerns you more than the happiness of your sister and your niece, and the historical destiny of your family.

HYACINTH. My dear sister, you have looked upon this robe of mine so often that you have ceased to notice it. It is true, I am more con-

cerned with rectitude and fair dealing than with all your schemes about Albert's throne and Alexandra's crown. . . . I regard my fellow man as a tool, but as a creature of God. In my younger days, when I maintained a racing stable, I sometimes found it necessary to enter one horse merely to lead and set the pace for another horse, and at the finish to lag behind and let him win the race. But that was a horse, my dear sister. And whoever seeks to use a man in that fashion; whoever holds the tranquillity of a human soul so cheaply—she, my dear sister, she has great need of the excuse that maternal love impels her. That is my opinion, dear; and now I, too, am going to look at that vacuum.

[*He exits quickly into the garden.*]

BEATRICE [*with determination*]. Nothing shall hinder me! Stop crying! I command you to put that handkerchief away. I am desperate now. You needn't pay any attention to him. He always had opinions, but never manners. If it had been left to the men of our family we'd have been dethroned as early as the eighteenth century. Go, and send Alexandra in to me.

[*SYMPHOROSA exits at right.*

There is a brief pause before ALEXANDRA enters.]

ALEXANDRA. You sent for me, mother?

BEATRICE. Yes, my child. You are dearest to me in all the world. My blood flows in your veins. You will understand me.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, mother.

BEATRICE. Your will is as strong as my own.

ALEXANDRA. Oh, yes, mother.

BEATRICE. And if it falters you must lean on my will for support, and make yourself as steadfast and determined as I am.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, mother.

BEATRICE. You know what I am referring to, and what it is I want. Do you want it as much as I do?

ALEXANDRA [*calmly, earnestly*]. Yes, mother.

BEATRICE. Wounded vanity heals quickly. After all, roses *are* more beautiful than cows.

ALEXANDRA. Oh, mother—

BEATRICE. And there is no weapon more powerful than will. You understand me, my child?

ALEXANDRA. I understand, but I don't know what you want me to do.

BEATRICE. We mean to ask the professor to the ball to-night. You will invite him.

ALEXANDRA [*astonished*]. I, mother?

BEATRICE. Yes, you.

ALEXANDRA. The professor?

BEATRICE. Yes. [*There are tears in her eyes.*] I know it is a dreadful thing to ask of you, my child . . . but desperate necessity compels me to. Don't hate your mother for it, my poor, dear child . . . love me, for I love you so. . . .

ALEXANDRA [*calm and self-contained*]. Mother!

BEATRICE [*dries her eyes*]. Must I explain any further? You understand, don't you?

ALEXANDRA. I understand you, mother.

BEATRICE. I wanted to send to Vienna for a duke, but there wasn't time. And that wouldn't have served as well, anyway—

ALEXANDRA [*coolly*]. As you wish.

I shall invite the professor to the ball to-night.

BEATRICE. But not with that expression.

ALEXANDRA. I know, mother. With another expression.

BEATRICE. And you will promise him that—[*Bursts into tears.*—that he may dance a quadrille with you. [ALEXANDRA *is silent.*] Well? Why don't you speak?

ALEXANDRA. This comes very suddenly, mother.

BEATRICE. But our time is so short! Oh, if we only had more time! Well! Speak!

ALEXANDRA. Don't misunderstand me, mother; I only want a moment to get used to the thought. The professor is a plain farmer's son.

BEATRICE. Alas!

ALEXANDRA. And when I think that my arm will rest in his.

BEATRICE. You will wear long gloves, my child.

ALEXANDRA. It isn't touching him that matters, mother . . . but the thought of it.

BEATRICE. He is one of God's creatures, just as we are.

ALEXANDRA. I'll try to remember that, mother.

BEATRICE. Do you ask the flowers and the beasts of the field who their ancestors were?

ALEXANDRA. No, mother.

BEATRICE [*reassuringly*]. Of course not! You are friendly with horses and squirrels and all sorts of common animals, aren't you?

ALEXANDRA. Yes, mother, from that point of view it is a bit easier.

BEATRICE. There, you see, my dear.

ALEXANDRA. But . . . there is something else to consider.

BEATRICE. Speak freely; I will guide you.

ALEXANDRA. He is a human being, isn't he?

BEATRICE [*without conviction*]. Oh, certainly, certainly.

ALEXANDRA. He is likely to *think* about it. And that is the great difference between him and a squirrel.

BEATRICE. That is his affair.

ALEXANDRA. But it is possible that he may misunderstand me.

BEATRICE. You will do nothing that he can possibly misunderstand. My mind is easy on that score.

ALEXANDRA. Of course not, mother. And yet he can't help but notice my sudden change of manner toward him.

BEATRICE. That need give us no concern.

ALEXANDRA. But I must know what I am to do if . . . of course . . . I only mentioned it because one ought to think of everything . . . if he should feel attracted to me.

BEATRICE [*in alarm*]. You haven't noticed anything of the kind?

ALEXANDRA. That must be thought of, too.

BEATRICE. Have you ever noticed anything of the kind in him?

ALEXANDRA [*coldly*]. I never notice what I don't want to notice.

BEATRICE. That means you have?

ALEXANDRA. I can't say that, but . . . he is not at ease when he speaks to me. He is not at ease.

BEATRICE. That signifies nothing, my child. Don't let it concern you. It's nothing to be ashamed of. It happens so often. Underlings of all sorts may be infatuated with a lady of high rank . . . officers, even physicians—

ALEXANDRA. But one mustn't—notice such things.

BEATRICE. Heaven forbid! But then the underling never dares to speak of his infatuation. Generally he works out his own salvation. Often in a most noble manner.

ALEXANDRA. But then—

BEATRICE. Don't trouble yourself about any one else. Leave that to us. You need only keep your eyes on the future, looking neither to the left nor to the right, but always ahead of you.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, mother.

[*ALFRED enters at right.*]

ALFRED. The professor reports to your highness that their young highnesses have put on their fencing costumes and are awaiting your highness' orders.

BEATRICE. The boys are to go to the gymnasium and wait there. The professor is to come in here. [*ALFRED exits at right. With tears in her eyes, BEATRICE turns to ALEXANDRA.*] Be strong, my poor, dear child. [*Kisses her, presses her hands warmly.*] Be strong—

[*She exits quickly into the garden. For a moment ALEXANDRA is alone, then AGI enters, in fencing costume. In his left hand he holds a fencing mask, in his right a sword. He stands stiff and formal at the door, awaiting orders. There is a pause.*]

ALEXANDRA [*stands down left; speaks without looking at him*]. To-night, . . . I understand there will be a rare astronomical spectacle.

AGI. Yes, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. What sort?

AGI. Vega and Capella may be seen to best advantage to-night.

ALEXANDRA. What is . . . Vega?

AGI. The chief star of Lyra. A green star which is a thousand times brighter than the sun.

ALEXANDRA. And the other?

AGI. Capella. A golden star, very beautiful.

ALEXANDRA. You intended to show them to the boys to-night.

AGI. Yes, your highness, in the tower.

ALEXANDRA. You love the stars?

AGI. Very much, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. And you know all about them?

AGI. I know very little about them, your highness. But even that little is marvelously beautiful.

ALEXANDRA. There will be no star-gazing to-night.

AGI. As your highness commands.

ALEXANDRA. We are having a farewell reception to-night in honor of the Crown Prince. He goes away to-morrow.

AGI. Too bad.

ALEXANDRA. The official personages of the neighborhood have been asked to come. There won't be many. I have expressed the desire that . . . you be invited, too. [AGI, *wide-eyed with astonishment, comes a pace or two nearer.*] That is why I said you couldn't look at the stars to-night.

AGI [*modestly*]. I am very happy, your highness; and if anything could make me happier, it is the privilege of receiving the invitation from your highness' own lips.

ALEXANDRA. The reception is likely to be stiff and formal. I hope you won't be bored.

AGI. I couldn't be bored where your highness was.

ALEXANDRA. In case you do find the society of officials and councilors tiresome, you may come to me.

AGI [*astonished*]. If your highness will allow me—

ALEXANDRA. Then, for once, perhaps you may speak to me about something other than fencing tricks. That's all you have ever spoken to me about.

AGI. It wasn't for me to choose, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. You will talk to me about the stars . . . about the green star and the golden star.

AGI. I shall esteem it a privilege, your highness.

[*There is a pause.*]

ALEXANDRA. Curious. I am a bit afraid of you now.

AGI. Why, your highness?

ALEXANDRA. You look so martial in that costume and with that sword in your hand.

AGI. Your highness has often seen me like this . . . in the gymnasium.

ALEXANDRA. That was different. There I had a sword in my hand, too. But here I feel so defenseless.

AGI. Do I look so terrifying?

ALEXANDRA. I shouldn't say—terrifying.

AGI. What then?

ALEXANDRA. Rather aggressive.

AGI [*astonished*]. It is curious, your highness . . . but I have the unaccountable feeling that I am wholly on the defensive . . . now. . . .

ALEXANDRA. Well, then, you'll come, won't you?

AGI. Yes, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. And won't you regret the green star?

AGI. No, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. At nine, then.

AGI. Thank you . . . your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Not at all . . . professor.

[*She nods curtly and exits at left into the garden. AGI's*

puzzled, thoughtful glance follows her until she has vanished. Then he stands a moment, head high, eyes blazing, before]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

[*THE BALL: A magnificent, brilliantly illuminated room. Big double doors at left and right. High arches in the back wall give out into a corridor, and beyond each arch is a tall glass door, curtained with some transparent material.*

Down right a table is laid for seven. Two tabourettes stand between the table and the audience. Soft music can be heard off-stage. It is midnight.

When the curtain rises CÉSAR is pouring wine into the glasses and putting the finishing touches to the table arrangements. Finished, he goes to the door at right and stands, immobile as a statue.

The glass door back left opens; SYMPHOROSA enters. For a moment the music sounds louder, a glimpse of people dancing can be seen; then the door is closed.

SYMPHOROSA stops, looks back as if she is expecting some one to follow her. After a brief pause the door is opened again and BEATRICE enters.]

BEATRICE. Did you beckon me to come out?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes.

BEATRICE. What do you want? Why do you act so mysteriously?

SYMPHOROSA. I didn't want to whisper to you in there.

BEATRICE. Don't be excited! What's the matter? Tell me calmly.

SYMPHOROSA. Beatrice, I think that Alexandra has been sitting in that corner with the professor altogether too long.

BEATRICE. For the first time in my life, Symphorosa, I think you are right.

SYMPHOROSA. It seems to me she is going just a bit further than is strictly necessary.

BEATRICE. Apparently I have made a mistake in the size of the dose. But don't worry, my dear.

SYMPHOROSA. She should be told that she has done enough for the present. Let her keep away from the professor a while.

BEATRICE. Very well, Symphorosa, go and tell her to keep away from the professor. Only how will you tell her?

SYMPHOROSA. I'll signal to her. Like this.

[*She indicates how.*]

BEATRICE. That's right, my dear. [*Embraces her affectionately.*] You are a darling!

SYMPHOROSA. And you are the cleverest woman in the world.

BEATRICE. Only the cleverest in this room. [*SYMPHOROSA makes a gesture of protest.*] For in the next room is a cleverer woman than I: my daughter. [*SYMPHOROSA sighs.*] Don't sigh. You'd do better to admire her poise and tact. And the effect it has had. Albert remarked

to me twice that to-night for the first time he has begun to notice how beautiful she is. He won't go away to-morrow. Wait and see. And the day after to-morrow his mother, Maria Dominica, will be here. [*Noticing SYMPHOROSA's impatience.*] You are impatient, my dear. Well, go and signal to her. [*SYMPHOROSA hurries off into the ballroom.* BEATRICE *watches her exit with a contented smile, then looks around the room; sees CÆSAR.*] Cæsar!

CÆSAR. Your highness.

BEATRICE. Is everything ready?

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness.

BEATRICE. The table?

CÆSAR. Seven covers. For his royal highness, the family, the adjutant and the professor.

BEATRICE. You will be sure that the service is flawless.

CÆSAR. Your highness!

BEATRICE. What is the menu?

CÆSAR. Everything his royal highness likes. His excellency, Count Leutzen, was good enough to indicate to me the dishes his royal highness prefers for supper.

BEATRICE. What are they?

CÆSAR. Cold bouillon.

BEATRICE. Yes.

CÆSAR. Cold salmon.

BEATRICE. Yes.

CÆSAR. Cold beef.

BEATRICE. Yes.

CÆSAR. With his own mustard.

BEATRICE. His own mustard?

CÆSAR. With his royal highness' own mustard.

BEATRICE. And what may that be?

CÆSAR. His royal highness carries his own mustard wherever he goes.

BEATRICE. That is a new custom!

CÆSAR. The chef says it is a very ancient custom. Eminent Greeks of

olden times always brought their own spices to the table of their host.

BEATRICE. Is the chef such a learned man?

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness. He also told me that the Greek gourmands used to wear a protective shell over their tongues, which they removed only at mealtimes.

BEATRICE [*gives him a look of stern reproof.*] I didn't ask you that.

CÆSAR. No, your highness. I took the liberty of mentioning it as a curiosity. . . .

BEATRICE. You will only answer my questions.

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness. And cold chicken.

BEATRICE. What's that?

CÆSAR. Cold chicken—after the beef.

BEATRICE. What time will supper be served?

CÆSAR. In twenty-four minutes, your highness. And an ice.

BEATRICE. The menu is too cold for me. In my cup you will serve hot tea, without sugar.

CÆSAR. I am afraid, your highness, that hot tea may be distinguishable from the cold bouillon . . . by the vapor.

BEATRICE. You will see to it that the hot tea has no vapor.

CÆSAR. I don't know just how that can be done, your highness, but it will be.

BEATRICE. I shall expect it to be. [*CÆSAR steps back as SYMPHOROSA re-enters.*] Well?

SYMPHOROSA. I signaled to her.

BEATRICE. Yes.

SYMPHOROSA. And she stood up immediately.

BEATRICE. Good. Now go and

see that Arsen puts those cold towels around his neck.

SYMPHOROSA. What a perfect mother you are!

BEATRICE. There is no other joy on earth. [SYMPHOROSA exits at left. She addresses CÆSAR.] Where is supper to be served from?

CÆSAR. From here, your highness. [He claps his hands twice. A procession of servants enters, slowly, single-file. ALFRED, platter in hand, comes first. After him come two lackeys, each carrying a platter, borne ceremonially aloft. In the rear are two hussars with champagne buckets. ALFRED and the two lackeys go to the table and, their backs to the audience, lay the three platters on the table. Simultaneously the two hussars deposit their buckets on the floor near the wall at right. Then the hussars take their station to the left of the right-hand arch while the two lackeys stand in profile between the arch and the doorway at right. ALFRED stands between them, bowing.]

CÆSAR. Voilà!

BEATRICE. Bravo, Cæsar!

[She hurries off into the ballroom. CÆSAR bows profoundly.]

CÆSAR [when the door has closed behind BEATRICE]. Hussars! [The hussars come forward. He inspects them from head to foot.] Right about, face! [They obey the order. He adjusts their tunics.] Left face! [They obey.] Very good. [The hussars step back.] Alfred! [ALFRED comes forward slowly, and with dignity.] Son Altesse Royale Madame la Duchesse prendra au lieu du consommé froid du thé chaud. Mais du thé chaud non fumant. Le thé doit faire comme couleur ab-

solument l'impression d'un consommé froid.

ALFRED. Javoli! Sic können sich bestimmt auf mich verlassen. Alles wird in Ordnung sein.

CÆSAR. Vabene mio caro, vabene, vabene, grazia, grazia.

[ALFRED exits, followed by the two lackeys. The hussars occupy themselves with the wine buckets and bottles. CÆSAR supervises their activities and gives them whispered orders. Meantime ALEXANDRA has entered back left. Behind her, almost beside her, comes AGI. His demeanor is a curious mixture of deferential formality and blissful intimacy.]

ALEXANDRA. Cæsar!

CÆSAR. Your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Is supper to be served in here?

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness. The guests will be served at small tables in the yellow salon. His royal highness and the family in here. Her highness, your mother, was here just a moment ago.

ALEXANDRA. Oh, then everything has been looked after. How soon will supper be served?

CÆSAR. In seventeen minutes. Has your highness any orders?

ALEXANDRA. Nothing, thank you.

[CÆSAR returns to the wine buckets. At his signal the hussars exit. During the following scene CÆSAR is very busy between the serving table and the supper table. But he is listening.]

AGI. May I escort you back to the ballroom?

ALEXANDRA. Please don't. . . I am afraid you misunderstood me.

When I said I was going in to look at the table . . . I . . . I didn't mean for you to come with me.

AGI. Your highness, I beg your pardon.

[*Is about to withdraw.*]

ALEXANDRA. Wait . . . don't go. [*Embarrassed.*] Perhaps I put it a bit too strongly; I didn't mean it that way.

AGI. Please, your highness.

[*CÆSAR discreetly exits back right.*]

ALEXANDRA. Forgive me. I am unpracticed in such things; I didn't mean to be rude.

AGI. I know, your highness. The reason I misunderstood was because while I was in the midst of my description of the constellation of the Eagle, your highness suddenly stood up . . . and so I thought I ought to stand up, too, and finish the sentence on the way. I was saying that these seven stars represent a flying eagle and that the eagle's head—

ALEXANDRA. That's where I stood up.

AGI. Yes. And it never occurred to me that you were making your escape.

ALEXANDRA. Your stars *were* beginning to get tiresome.

AGI. I am sorry, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. I had expected to hear about the mysteries and the miracles of the sky, and you spoke only of names and numbers. I never knew the subject was so tedious.

AGI. The stars have their emotional side, too. But I didn't dare to speak of it.

ALEXANDRA. Perhaps . . . that might have been more exciting.

AGI. I could have told you how across those vast distances and be-

yond the millions of stars one's thoughts go on to God and His eternity . . . to life and death . . . to life . . . [*Softly.*] . . . and love.

ALEXANDRA [*coldly*]. Can your imagination bridge such vast distances as that?

AGI. When I look up to you, your highness—yes.

[*There is a pause.*]

ALEXANDRA [*more coldly*]. And eternity, too?

AGI. When I look down upon myself, your highness.

[*Another pause.*]

ALEXANDRA. And you believe in such miracles?

AGI. If I didn't believe in miracles, your highness, how could I endure my life?

ALEXANDRA. Is it so unendurable?

AGI. It would be, if—

ALEXANDRA. If?

AGI. If I hadn't two—an outer and an inner life.

ALEXANDRA. Have you? I never noticed.

AGI. Because your highness believes in miracles, too. . . . You believe my cold and impassive face . . . cold and impassive . . . even when it is slapped.

ALEXANDRA [*in surprise*]. Is your face slapped?

AGI. Every day.

ALEXANDRA. Who slaps your face? [*He does not answer.*] Who? Do we? Do I? [*He nods his head.*] Without knowing it?

AGI. They are the worst slaps of all.

ALEXANDRA. I must say . . . this is more mysterious than the stars. Do I hurt you?

AGI. Every day your highness looks upon a miracle. A man's face,

his voice, all his outward appearance remain calm and unruffled . . . while inwardly he burns. And you never ask for the explanation of the miracle.

ALEXANDRA. The explanation?

AGI [*with rising passion.*]. Why does your highness suppose I endure it all? Why do I go on teaching, humbly, silently and submissively? Why do I stifle my individuality? Why am I here at all?

[ALBERT enters at left with two ladies.]

ALEXANDRA. I never thought—

ALBERT [*good-humoredly interrupts*]. An ideal daughter of the house! Before the concert she looks after the musicians, and before supper she looks after the table. Her watchful eye is everywhere.

FIRST LADY. Your highness ought to see her at the hospital among the poor sick people.

ALEXANDRA. You mustn't flatter me, Countess. The praise is due to you and the other ladies. I am there because it is my duty to be.

SECOND LADY. Oh, your highness.

ALBERT. Delightfully modest, isn't she? I know. You have the same noble character as your dear mother. Good evening, professor. [AGI bows profoundly. ALBERT addresses the two ladies.] A brilliant fellow, this young man. [*Starts up right with the two ladies.*] He is not only a scientifically trained astronomer and teacher but also a swordsman of the first rank. I saw him fencing with the boys this afternoon; and I must say, *c'était parfait, absolument parfait!*

[Exits with the ladies as he speaks.]

ALEXANDRA. Now you are more

melancholy than ever. . . . Why?

AGI. Shall I say it, your highness?

ALEXANDRA. Is it anything I shouldn't hear?

AGI [*looking toward the door through which ALBERT has vanished*]. I am jealous, your highness.

[There is a pause.]

ALEXANDRA. I am grieved, professor. Suddenly you have made me remember . . . those vast distances you spoke of before.

AGI. To-night . . . to-night they hadn't seemed so vast.

ALEXANDRA. Yes . . . to-night. . . .

AGI. To-night, for the first time, you looked at me as if I were a human being . . . a man. . . . Looked at me . . . and said friendly . . . intimate things to me—

ALEXANDRA. I said nothing that—

AGI [*with growing boldness*]. What you said . . . and did . . . and looked . . . bewildered me, upset my balance, broke down my self-control . . . else I should never have spoken. There is a sort of poetry in hopelessness. Until to-night, at least I had that. It was beautiful in its way. But now it's gone, too. A pity!

ALEXANDRA. I don't know what to say . . . I wish I could give it back to you.

AGI. That's beyond your power, little princess.

ALEXANDRA. Don't call me that, if you please.

AGI. You see, I can't speak to you the way I used to. I am confused, your highness. But to-morrow . . . to-morrow . . .

ALEXANDRA. No, no, . . . it must be settled now. I don't want any more misunderstanding. I had better tell you . . . everything . . .

though I'm terribly ashamed. . . .

AGI. Your highness?

ALEXANDRA. No, no, I can't tell you. . . .

AGI. I implore you, tell me. I—
[*Hopefully.*] Tell me. Obey your heart. Take courage, and tell me what above all things in the world I want to hear. . . .

ALEXANDRA. No, no; you are misunderstanding me again. But it's my fault. What I have to tell you is quite painful.

AGI. What is it, your highness?

ALEXANDRA. It's about a deception that has been practiced on you.

AGI. A deception?

[*There is a pause.*]

ALEXANDRA. You are a gentleman, and you respect me.

AGI. Your highness. . . .

ALEXANDRA. And I can rely on your discretion.

AGI. Yes.

ALEXANDRA. Absolutely?

AGI. Absolutely.

ALEXANDRA. Yes . . . I know you to be a man of honor and a friend of the family . . . and I feel that I shall never have peace of mind again until I tell you. . . . My family . . . my mother has but one ambition in life—to restore our family to its throne. And to that end she wants me to marry the Crown Prince. . . . You will understand . . . it is not easy for me to tell you this. . . . Every word I speak is like blood . . . flowing from a wound. . . . Professor . . . the Crown Prince showed no interest in me, and my mother decided . . . that if some one else were here . . . some man . . . to whom I could be attentive . . . Albert's interest in me . . . might be aroused. . . . I want you

to believe, professor, that I never meant to hurt you . . . and that I am sorry, if I have. Before to-night . . . when I was cold and formal with you . . . it was because I knew that you were . . . not at ease . . . in my presence. My mother asked me to invite you to the ball to-night. I have never disobeyed her, but if I had known . . . if I could have foreseen . . . that a man's eyes would light up like that when his heart was aflame . . . that any one would dare . . . to look into my eyes . . . as you have looked— [*She pauses, walks slowly to the table, sits down.*] Now I have told you, professor. Now you know how you have been deceived. [*There is a pause.*] Have you nothing to say?

AGI [*his head is bowed*]. You only obeyed orders.

ALEXANDRA. I don't want to seem more blameless than I am; it is hateful of me to put all the blame on mother. [*After a pause, she continues earnestly, dreamily, almost sadly.*] I want to be a queen.

[*Lets her head sink on her arm. There is a pause.*]

AGI [*softly*]. That means . . . I may go now.

ALEXANDRA. Why do you say that?

AGI. I have served my purpose.

ALEXANDRA [*rises*]. I am afraid I shouldn't have told you. How strangely you look at me!

[*The music stops.*]

AGI. Something is broken in me. . . . Why did you tell me?

ALEXANDRA. Shouldn't I have told you?

AGI. Why did you tell me?

ALEXANDRA. Because I respect you. I want to be friends with you.

AGI. Do you? How touching! . . . Like the good princess in the fairy tale. But I am not a lad any more . . . to believe in fairy tales.

ALEXANDRA. Are you going to . . . punish me?

AGI. I adore you . . . humbly and hopelessly again. [*Bitterly, earnestly, mockingly.*] You needn't be afraid of me, I know my place. I am still an obedient servant to your illustrious family. And what though I may be wounded a bit and bleeding, I cannot but be honored by the exalted rôle that has been entrusted to me. It is even beginning to amuse and interest me.

ALEXANDRA. You sound insincere.

AGI. Perhaps only bitter.

ALEXANDRA [*uneasily*]. And I thought it was a kindness to tell you the whole truth.

AGI. You have no further need of me. The bridegroom has caught fire; the teacher can be extinguished.

ALEXANDRA. I won't have you think such things of me, or say such things to me.

AGI. Have no fear. I am silent and I serve. Don't look at me so distrustfully. Let us smile and act as if nothing has happened. [*ALBERT appears at back.*] Can't you smile? See, I can. We were talking about the eagle. [*Louder.*] And the head of the eagle—

[*ALBERT enters with BEATRICE and the two ladies.*]

ALBERT. Still here?

ALEXANDRA. The professor has been telling me such interesting things. There is an uncommon astronomical spectacle to-night.

ALBERT. Where?

AGI [*uneasily*]. In the sky, your highness.

ALBERT. I know that. But which stars?

AGI. It is not really anything uncommon. Only that a few so-called summer stars may be observed to particularly good advantage to-night. Capella, Arcturus, Vega and the constellation of the Eagle [*With significance.*] which consists of seven stars, which seven stars form a flying eagle; and the head of the eagle . . .

ALBERT [*significantly*]. I had no idea this was such an interesting night.

ALEXANDRA [*nervously*]. And the head of the eagle—

ALBERT. You are very much interested in the stars, aren't you, Alexandra?

ALEXANDRA. I never thought much about them until to-night.

ALBERT. Thought more about roses—what? But to-night the sky is illuminated—what? A beautiful summer night. [*Significantly.*] The stars shine like eyes.

BEATRICE. If you are interested, we have a very good observatory in the tower.

ALBERT. Have you? I didn't know.

ALEXANDRA. Oh, only an amateur's observatory.

ALBERT. Doubtless the brilliant professor fitted it up. The young man of a thousand talents . . . what?

AGI. No, your highness, it was here when I came.

ALBERT. I wonder you didn't mention it before.

ALEXANDRA. You go to bed so early. And the stars have no regard for etiquette.

ALBERT. Bravo! That retort was so clever the professor himself might have thought of it . . . what?

ALEXANDRA. No, Albert. I thought of it myself.

ALBERT [*to HYACINTH, who has just entered with SYMPHOROSA*]. Did you hear what she said?

HYACINTH. Who?

ALBERT. Xara. She said the stars have no regard for etiquette.

[*A gong sounds. CÆSAR, the two hussars and ALFRED enter.*

The COLONEL enters back left.]

BEATRICE. We dragged the doctor away from his beloved stars to-night.

HYACINTH. And also the poor boys.

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, the poor boys looked forward to it all day. They are delighted with any excuse for not going to bed early.

HYACINTH. Well, they can see them to-morrow. Fortunately the stars are eternal, eh? One can always put them off until to-morrow.

[*The Two LADIES exit back left.*]

ALBERT. I didn't know you had an observatory.

HYACINTH. Oh, yes. Ever since my late brother-in-law, Henry, bought a big telescope. You have seen it often, Colonel.

WUNDERLICH. Oh, yes. Once I burned my tongue up there.

ALBERT. With the telescope?

WUNDERLICH. No, your highness. There was some acid in a cup up there, and I tasted it.

SYMPHOROSA. I can imagine what an impression it must have made on you.

WUNDERLICH. I shall never forget it, your highness.

BEATRICE. I think, Albert, it's time to eat something.

ALBERT. I hope to eat a great deal.

I always have a ravenous appetite at night. Haven't I, Wunderlich?

WUNDERLICH. God be thanked, your highness.

ALEXANDRA [*to AGI, low*]. I shouldn't like them to read in your face what we have been talking about.

[*ALEXANDRA and AGI stand down stage left; HYACINTH and ALBERT at center, a trifle back; BEATRICE and SYMPHOROSA down right, in front of the table.*]

ALBERT. Xara is absorbed in the science of the stars.

AGI [*to ALEXANDRA*]. I'll try, your highness, but I am afraid it's too late.

BEATRICE [*to ALBERT*]. She takes a keen interest in the education of the boys. She supervises their studies.

ALEXANDRA. That sounds as if you are threatening me.

ALBERT. Xara will be an astronomer yet.

HYACINTH. Hardly a career to attract a woman.

ALEXANDRA. I have offended you deeply.

AGI. Yes, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Won't you forgive me?

AGI. No, your highness.

[*ALBERT comes slowly toward ALEXANDRA.*]

SYMPHOROSA [*to BEATRICE, in an agitated whisper*]. Something has happened between them.

BEATRICE. Don't say such things to frighten me, or I shall faint on the spot.

[*She moves toward AGI.*]

ALBERT [*as he joins ALEXANDRA*]. Xara, will you leave the starry firmament, and come down to earth a while? May I offer my arm?

ALEXANDRA [*takes his arm. Nerv-*

ously]. What an *unexpected* honor, your highness.

SYMPHOROSA [*to BEATRICE*]. See how excited he is. His ears are red. Better send him away at once.

BEATRICE. Leave him to me. I'll send him away.

ALBERT [*escorting ALEXANDRA slowly to the table*]. First you neglect me, and now you make fun of me.

ALEXANDRA. I neglect you? How can you say that?

[*AGI has slowly followed ALEXANDRA.*]

BEATRICE [*intercepting him at center*]. You seem to be in bad humor, professor.

AGI. No, your highness. If you will permit me to say so, this is the happiest night of my life.

BEATRICE. But you do seem nervous . . . and agitated.

AGI. It's the unaccustomed surroundings, your highness.

HYACINTH [*at the table, to ALEXANDRA*]. You seem agitated, my child. But no matter, you are all the prettier when your cheeks are flushed.

ALEXANDRA [*at the table*]. I always get flushed when I hear music.

BEATRICE. If you are tired, we will excuse you. Don't forget you must be up early in the morning.

AGI. I am not tired, your highness. On the contrary, I am only beginning to be awake.

ALBERT [*to ALEXANDRA*]. Do you love music?

BEATRICE [*calls to him*]. She adores music. She sings, too!

ALBERT. And you never sang for me!

SYMPHOROSA [*who is standing with BEATRICE and AGI*]. Don't hesitate to go, professor, if you are sleepy.

AGI. Sleepy, your highness? Why, I just woke up . . . not five minutes ago.

ALEXANDRA [*to ALBERT*]. I hesitate to sing for you. You know so much about music.

ALBERT. I? About music? That's capital! Did you hear that, Wunderlich?

WUNDERLICH. I heard, your highness.

BEATRICE [*to AGI, again obstructing his way*]. You are in a bad humor, professor. Suppose we send your supper up to your room.

AGI. I'll eat my supper here.

[*BEATRICE is startled by his tone.*]

ALBERT. Well, Aunt Beatrice, are you studying astronomy, too? Do you want to starve us to death?

BEATRICE [*hurries to the table*]. God forbid, dear Albert!

SYMPHOROSA [*as she, too, goes to the table*]. We are lost!

ALBERT. I have always observed that my appetite is keenest at night.

HYACINTH. There you are like Louis XIV.

BEATRICE. Shall we sit down? [*ALBERT and ALEXANDRA sit.*] Sit here, professor.

[*Indicates the place between SYMPHOROSA and her. But AGI sits next to ALEXANDRA.*]

AGI. Thank you.

BEATRICE. Not there, professor . . . here!

AGI [*does not stir*]. This will do very well, thank you.

[*Painful silence. Shaking his head, HYACINTH sits.*]

SYMPHOROSA [*whispers to BEATRICE*]. We are lost! I know there's going to be a scandal.

ALBERT. The Bourbons had healthy appetites by day as well.

LOUIS XVIII once consumed fifteen lamb chops at a public dinner. Imagine how much he must have eaten when no one was looking. That disgusts you, doesn't it, Beatrice? You are not listening.

BEATRICE [*nervously*]. Indeed I am. Louis XV consumed eighteen lamb chops.

ALBERT. No, it was the eighteenth Louis and the fifteenth lamb chop.

[*The lackeys, at the serving table, are preparing to serve the soup.*]

BEATRICE [*sweetly*]. I hope you like cold bouillon, Albert.

ALBERT. My favorite summer beverage.

BEATRICE. I am so glad.

SYMPHOROSA [*sweetly*]. What a fortunate coincidence!

HYACINTH. How long they are taking to serve it.

BEATRICE. Here it comes now, dear. [*CÉSAR, the two hussars and ALFRED serve the soup.*] You can't keep it on the table, for it gets warm.

[*Each is served, and tastes the soup. Ceremonial silence.*]

AGI [*unexpectedly, though not loudly, breaks the silence*]. And the head of the eagle—I really must finish that sentence—is a star called Altair or Alpha Aquilæ, the star whose brilliant green radiance illuminates the sky to-night. That is what I wanted to say.

ALEXANDRA. You had quite a difficult time reaching the end of that sentence.

ALBERT. Doubtless the professor speaks so beautifully because Xara likes to listen to him.

BEATRICE. It was beautiful, but I didn't understand a word of it.

AGI. I don't know how to speak beautifully. Her highness reproached me with it just a while ago.

ALBERT [*to ALEXANDRA*]. Did you?

ALEXANDRA. Yes.

BEATRICE [*to change the subject*]. Is the soup cold enough, Albert?

[*Music begins.*]

ALBERT. Just right.

WUNDERLICH. His highness likes his soup at eight degrees Celsius.

HYACINTH. Beautiful speech is not the most important thing. What counts is the fact that he has studied a great deal, and knows a great deal.

AGI. Perhaps the reason I can't speak well is that I have never done anything but study.

HYACINTH. That never hurt you, my boy.

ALBERT. How many hours a day did you study?

AGI. Usually—ten. . . . And as many every night.

ALBERT. Ten and ten are twenty.

[*He rises.*]

BEATRICE. What are you looking for, my dear?

ALBERT. The salt.

WUNDERLICH. Here it is, your highness.

ALBERT. Thanks. [*Resumes his seat; takes the salt.*] That left you four hours for sleep.

AGI. Not that many—sometimes.

ALBERT. That is very bad. I need fifteen hours' sleep myself.

[*A pause.*]

SYMPHOROSA. I need eight.

[*A pause.*]

HYACINTH. I need six.

[*A pause.*]

SYMPHOROSA [*to WUNDERLICH*]. And you?

[*A long pause.*]

WUNDERLICH. Two.

AGI. It is a matter of individual habit. For instance, Napoleon—

[*Stops suddenly. A painful silence. Each sips his bouillon. The cups are put down simultaneously.*]

BEATRICE. And so you can't speak properly because you've studied too much?

AGI. The many things one takes in from books must first dissolve themselves in the blood, your highness. They must ferment like wine. Then only will they release that beautiful bouquet, that fine fragrance, called poetry. There is a bit of poetry in every man, but many things must happen before it becomes articulate.

ALBERT. A pretty woman . . . what?

AGI. Perhaps. . . .

BEATRICE. But . . . Albert. . . .

HYACINTH. It depends on the woman. . . . I have met women who stifled the poetry in a man.

BEATRICE. They are quite right. I don't like poets.

AGI. It depends on the man. . . . I have met men whom no woman can hurt. I envy them.

ALEXANDRA. Why?

[*The bouillon cups are removed.*]

AGI. Because I am so easily hurt myself.

ALBERT. By women?

AGI. By any intense emotion. I am supersensitive, I suppose. What another man would only laugh at—might do me irreparable injury.

ALBERT. But that is really unnecessary.

AGI. I know.

BEATRICE. And not very probable.

ALBERT. But I daresay you have had your experience with women.

AGI. No, your highness. Only with books.

[*ALFRED serves from a platter. Only HYACINTH, ALBERT and WUNDERLICH help themselves.*]

ALBERT. Oh, come now!

AGI. It is true, your highness. My first taste of the world was here. I came here straight from my books. And it would be a pity . . . if anything happened . . . to drive me back to them again.

HYACINTH. It *would* be a pity!

AGI. Please, don't misunderstand me. It is not myself I am thinking about . . . but—I have a mother . . . and you see . . . I am the only son . . . all she has. And I have a sister, too. . . . She isn't pretty, poor girl, but I have educated her . . . done all I could for her. I'd like to see her happily married . . . and then— [*Looks about him.*] I beg your pardon, I didn't realize I was the only one speaking.

ALEXANDRA. Go on. Go on . . . I am very much interested in what you are saying.

AGI. And there is also my old teacher, Dr. Waldbrott.

HYACINTH. Of the University of Heidelberg?

AGI. Yes, Father, he lectures there.

ALBERT. On what subject?

AGI. Astral chemistry.

ALBERT [*to HYACINTH*]. Tell me what that is.

HYACINTH. The chemistry of the heavenly bodies.

ALBERT. Oh!

HYACINTH. I know the old gentleman—an admirable man and an eminent scholar.

AGI. Yes, isn't he? He . . . honors me with his confidence.

ALBERT. Chemistry of the heavenly bodies?

AGI. Yes.

ALBERT. Yes.

[*There is a pause.*]

AGI. Dr. Waldbrott used to say to me that he would die happy if he could be sure that I would continue his life's work. He has entrusted his two great theories . . . to me.

ALBERT. I beg your pardon, but how many great theories had he altogether?

AGI. Two.

ALBERT. And he entrusted them both to you?

AGI. Yes.

ALBERT. Good!

AGI. It is a very important, a very serious trust, your highness.

ALBERT. Certainly, certainly.

AGI. It carries a grave responsibility. . . . My teacher, my mother and my sister . . . it is only on their account that I prize my insignificant life . . . when it . . . [*Looks at ALEXANDRA.*] . . . when it's in danger. [*Silence. He raises his glass.*] I drink to the welfare of the beautiful young princess.

[*Drains the glass in a single gulp. SYMPHOROSA nudges BEATRICE repeatedly with her elbow.*]

ALBERT. Prosit! That was a mighty draught!

[*Smiling, he nudges his neighbors.*]

HYACINTH. That was the draught of a novice. One doesn't drink heavy wine like this so quickly.

AGI. I didn't know, Father. I never had the pleasure of drinking it before.

HYACINTH. Then let me introduce you with appropriate ceremony.

This is Tokay, my boy, and of the very oldest.

BEATRICE. And it is drunk with dessert, and not with the soup.

HYACINTH. A two-fold error: you drank too soon and you drank too much.

AGI. I didn't know, Father. I must own it was the first glass of wine I ever drank in my life.

HYACINTH. Not really?

AGI. Really, Father. . . . There, you see, that, too, had to happen to-night.

[*ALEXANDRA empties her own glass.*]

BEATRICE. Alexandra!

HYACINTH [*take, ALEXANDRA's glass*]. And I had just finished saying that one doesn't drink this wine so fast.

ALBERT. It's plain to see why Xara did it.

HYACINTH. Why?

ALBERT. To keep the professor in countenance.

BEATRICE. It was quite unnecessary. You never take any wine.

ALEXANDRA. I do to-night, mother. [*To ALBERT.*] Albert . . . see that this old professor gets some appointment. Waldbrott—that was his name, wasn't it?

HYACINTH. Waldbrott—yes.

ALBERT. If you wish it—I can write to Berlin. Please, Wunderlich, make a note of it.

WUNDERLICH [*writes in his notebook*]. I am making a note of it, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. What sort of appointment can one get for a man like that?

AGI. That's just it—none at all.

ALBERT. Surely the Emperor can do something for him.

AGI. Hardly, your highness. The man serves a greater lord.

ALBERT. A greater lord than the Emperor?

AGI. One much greater. [*Points upwards.*] He is an astronomer.

ALEXANDRA. I should like to meet your sister.

AGI. She is in Dresden, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Do you love her very much?

AGI. Very much, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. A stupid question to ask, wasn't it?

BEATRICE [*uneasily*]. Yes, my child, it was.

AGI. No, your highness, it was a clever question because it is a pleasure to answer it. I love my sister with all my heart. In my darkest hours I think of her. For she has the indomitable faith that I cannot be crushed, that I am a world unto myself.

ALBERT [*somewhat ironically*]. A whole world?

AGI. Yes, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. How beautiful.

ALBERT. Isn't that a great deal?

AGI [*courageously*]. No, your highness. As an astronomer one learns that the tiniest speck is not to be despised. [*With significance.*] Those little specks in the sky . . . every single one . . . is a great world.

ALBERT. Every one?

AGI [*more bravely*]. Every one!

ALBERT [*a bit sharply*]. Perhaps they only think so, those little specks.

AGI [*still more bravely, though not loudly*]. Oh, I know it is difficult for the great lords to realize. They say: "Ten million inhabitants make an army of two millions." . . . Yet

it is true that, among all these millions, each individual is a world in himself, a world which may not be destroyed.

BEATRICE [*uneasily*]. But, professor, who is trying to destroy any worlds?

AGI. Women, for example, do it with a smile. [*To ALEXANDRA.*] Your highness, why do you look at me so fixedly?

ALEXANDRA. I like what you are saying.

AGI [*to BEATRICE*]. And your highness looks at me so uneasily. Perhaps you don't like what I'm saying.

BEATRICE [*coldly*]. That is not the tone in which you are accustomed to speak to me, professor.

AGI [*bitterly*]. I am in very good humor to-night.

BEATRICE. Better than we care for, professor.

ALEXANDRA [*soothingly*]. Mother, we are at a ball and are drinking champagne. . . .

[*Raises her glass.*]

BEATRICE. I am astonished, professor.

SYMPHOROSA [*in alarm, suddenly*]. Albert, I commend the salmon to you. It is the pride of our chef.

ALBERT. I say, he does put it well. That's why Xara is so interested. What's that about the salmon? [*To SYMPHOROSA.*] Did you say something about the salmon?

SYMPHOROSA. It's the pride of our chef.

ALBERT. Oh, is it? . . . But what has that to do with it?

SYMPHOROSA. Nothing. I just mentioned it.

ALBERT. Oh! Yes! Well! Little specks in the sky. Astronomy. Romance. Empty phrases.

AGI [*heatedly*]. No, not empty phrases, your highness.

ALBERT. Oh, yes, they are. Phrases for women. To impress them. Every star a world in itself!

AGI [*belligerently*]. Not every star, your highness.

ALBERT. No?

AGI. No. The big white moon, for example . . . it makes a huge, pretentious, glittering show, yet it has no light of its own. It only reflects the light of the sun. On the other hand, there is the modest little star called Vega, which you seem to hold in such contempt . . . its light is a thousand times stronger than the light of the sun.

[SYMPHOROSA nudges BEATRICE.]

ALBERT. Its modesty is charming, under the circumstances.

AGI [*sharply*]. It isn't modesty, your highness. It is only remoteness.

ALBERT. It is fitting for remote things to glimmer modestly.

AGI [*openly truculent*]. It only seems so to your highness. To me, because I know what it is, it shines in its true value; and so I proudly proclaim that it is more brilliant than the sun, and that its brilliance is its own. . . . [Puts his hand on his chest.] Its own!

ALBERT [*smiling*]. Possibly, professor. It seems I do not understand these things.

AGI [*decidedly*]. No, your highness.

BEATRICE [*to SYMPHOROSA in a narrowed whisper*]. I can't bear it any longer.

ALBERT. Charming! Charming! At last a man who tells me to my face that there is something I do not understand.

AGI [*stubbornly*]. No, your high-

ness doesn't know anything about it.

ALBERT [*forcing himself to seem pleased*]. In twenty years I haven't heard any one so outspoken. Professor, I admire you not only as an astronomer, but as a man. I am charmed with your candor.

AGI [*as if offended*]. It makes no difference to me whether you like it or not.

ALBERT [*jovially*]. There's candor for you! Charming! I'm really enjoying myself here.

BEATRICE [*weakly*]. Oh!

[*She rises suddenly, sways. General consternation.*]

ALBERT [*puts down his glass*]. What's the matter, Aunt Beatrice? [*He rises.*] Aunt Beatrice! *Tu te trouves mal?*

BEATRICE [*weakly*]. My head . . . all of a sudden. . . . *Laisse moi . . . je vous en prie*—forgive me. . . . [WUNDERLICH has gone to her assistance and is supporting her.] *Merci, mon Colonel.* . . . Never mind. . . .

[*The hussars swiftly draw the portières across both big arches. WUNDERLICH leaves BEATRICE and crosses to left.*]

ALBERT. *Tu te trouves mal, Tante Béatrice?*

BEATRICE. I am sorry . . . a little weakness . . . please don't bother . . . I'll retire.

WUNDERLICH [*to CÆSAR*]. Have that music stopped.

[*CÆSAR whispers to ALFRED, who hurries off. The music stops.*]

ALBERT [*takes BEATRICE's arm*]. I don't doubt that you exerted yourself too much to-day. Let me see you to your room.

HYACINTH. Don't bother, Albert. I'll take her up.

ALBERT. No, no. Stay here . . . everybody. [*To SYMPHOROSA, who is about to accompany them.*] Symphorosa, you stay here with the salmon. Please sit down, Xara. No excitement. I'll look after her.

BEATRICE [*in a faint voice*]. No excitement . . . with a houseful of strangers . . . oh . . . oh!

ALBERT. All right, my dear . . . everything will be all right. [*To the others.*] I wish you all to remain here, please. [*Goes toward left, supporting BEATRICE.*] As if nothing had happened. [*As he passes CÆSAR.*] Why has the music stopped?

WUNDERLICH [*answers for CÆSAR*]. I thought your highness would prefer no music during this unfortunate—

ALBERT [*leading BEATRICE slowly off*]. Let the music continue. The more the better!

[*CÆSAR makes a sign to ALFRED, who exits.*]

BEATRICE. *Pardonnez moi . . . Merci, mon cher. . .*

[*ALBERT and BEATRICE exit.*]

WUNDERLICH [*as he follows them*]. Music.

[*He looks at CÆSAR. There is a brief pause, and the music begins again. Beaming with satisfaction, WUNDERLICH exits. All except SYMPHOROSA resume their seats.*]

AGI. Is your highness ill, too?

SYMPHOROSA. No.

AGI. Well, then—

SYMPHOROSA. I don't know what to do.

AGI. Why not follow their highnesses? And let the music continue? The more the better.

SYMPHOROSA [*crosses to left; looks*

at ALEXANDRA]. What are you going to do?

[*ALEXANDRA rises, undecided.*]

HYACINTH. Stay here. Your mother forbade you to leave.

SYMPHOROSA [*to HYACINTH*]. And you?

HYACINTH. See here, my dear; I love Beatrice very much, but she has been having these delicate attacks for thirty years. And I have seen too many of them to be alarmed. If they strike her standing, she sits down . . . and if they strike her sitting, she rises.

SYMPHOROSA. Karl!

HYACINTH [*earnestly*]. The situation here is much more serious. I warned you this afternoon.

SYMPHOROSA. What a misfortune!

[*She exits at left. CÆSAR withdraws. HYACINTH, AGI and ALEXANDRA are left alone. There is a pause. ALEXANDRA sits on the taboret, down right.*]

HYACINTH [*severely*]. Well, my son, you see what mischief you have done.

ALEXANDRA [*greatly agitated*]. It was my fault, Hyacinth. I am entirely to blame. That is why I stayed . . . to . . .

HYACINTH. Don't excite yourself, my child. Let us talk it over calmly. That is why I stayed. You have nothing to fear while I am here. [*To AGI.*] But you have.

AGI [*sits*]. No, Father, I'm not afraid.

ALEXANDRA. It wasn't his fault. How deeply hurt he must have been, to do such a thing! I am so unhappy, Hyacinth!

[*She buries her face in the robe*

of HYACINTH, *who is standing beside her.*

HYACINTH. Calm yourself, dear.

AGI [*rises. Vehemently*]. I couldn't endure it any longer, Father, I couldn't. . . . God is my witness, I tried. But I am only human, Father, and . . . in love . . . I hardly knew what I was saying. . . .

HYACINTH. Tell me, my son, are you angry with me, too?

AGI. How could I be, Father?

HYACINTH. Then don't shout like that. I can hear you. And I understand you too, my son.

AGI [*grandiosely; excitedly*]. I am done for, but I shan't sell my life cheaply. Not even to this beautiful daughter of a king. Yesterday—no, this very afternoon, I would have given it for her handkerchief. But now that blood has been let, I hold it dearly.

HYACINTH. What you have done—

AGI. I am ready to face the consequences.

HYACINTH. I knew you would be, my son.

AGI [*very grandiosely*]. I am ready to answer for it: to anybody—to the family, to the Prince, or to his adjutant with swords or any weapons they choose. But what I did I had to do. And there is more I have to do.

HYACINTH. More?

AGI. Yes, more.

HYACINTH. And this is our serious young scientist! [*To ALEXANDRA.*] Well, my girl, see what we have come to. Here we are. [*Reproachfully.*] How do you like it?

ALEXANDRA. Come here.

HYACINTH [*goes to her*]. Well?

ALEXANDRA. Sit down here.

[*He does so.*]

HYACINTH. Well?

ALEXANDRA. Now ask me again how I like it

HYACINTH. How do you like it?

ALEXANDRA [*on his shoulder, low*].

Hyacinth . . . I like it very much.

HYACINTH [*astonished*]. Upon my soul! The thing is worse than I thought.

[*Moves nearer to her.*]

ALEXANDRA [*still on his shoulder*].

Hyacinth . . . dear Hyacinth . . . I . . . I . . .

HYACINTH. Well, my child? What is it? Out with it!

ALEXANDRA. Hyacinth . . . that glass of wine . . . it was the first I ever drank in my life, too.

HYACINTH. For a first drink it was a hearty one.

ALEXANDRA [*with a glance at AGI*]. For his sake, Hyacinth. So that they wouldn't laugh at him.

HYACINTH. Fancy that! You amaze me. And how did it taste?

ALEXANDRA [*delighted*]. Made me . . . fuddled . . . and warm. . . . I wish I could die like this . . . But first I want the professor to forgive me.

AGI. How *can* I forgive you?

HYACINTH. Silence! There, there, I forgive you for him, my dear. [*ALEXANDRA dries her tears.*] Have your cry out, and don't worry about it.

ALEXANDRA. That's not why I am crying, Hyacinth.

HYACINTH. Why, then?

ALEXANDRA. Because I . . . am sorry . . . for him.

AGI. You needn't be sorry for me.

HYACINTH [*mildly*]. You are not to speak now, my son.

ALEXANDRA. I have never been as sorry for any one . . .

HYACINTH. And when he looks at you, you are sorrier for him than ever.

ALEXANDRA [*looks at AGI*]. When he looks at me, his eyes scorch my face . . . just as when you open the door of a stove—

HYACINTH. Yes, yes. The door of a stove. And what then?

ALEXANDRA [*in child-like surprise*]. And then . . . then . . . his glance seems to enter my breast . . . and touch . . . my heart . . . just as you touch a key of the piano with one finger . . . very softly.

HYACINTH. A key of the piano. Yes, yes . . . and what else? . . .

ALEXANDRA. When he speaks . . . since I hurt him . . . when he speaks, his voice rings in my consciousness for a long time after. . . . Like a bell. And that hurts. I pity him so.

HYACINTH [*concerned*]. I see, my dear. Only I am afraid it is neither remorse nor pity.

ALEXANDRA. What then?

HYACINTH. A bit of internal disorder . . . the lungs . . . the heart. . . . [*Puts his ear to her chest.*] Take a deep breath. Now sigh. [*ALEXANDRA sighs.*] Say, "Professor."

ALEXANDRA [*looks at AGI*]. Professor. . . .

HYACINTH [*dryly*]. The heart.

ALEXANDRA [*sorrowfully, reproachfully*]. You are making fun of me, Hyacinth.

HYACINTH. Not at all, my child. The matter is very serious. Tell me, dear. When . . . did you begin . . . er . . . to pity him so?

ALEXANDRA. Before. Here in this room. . . . Quite suddenly. . . . He said something—

HYACINTH. What did he say?

ALEXANDRA [*looks at AGI*]. He will remember the word.

HYACINTH. What was it, my son?

AGI. I know, Father. It was when I said that I, too, was a world in myself.

ALEXANDRA. No.

AGI. No? Well, then it was before that . . . when I spoke of the poetry of hopelessness.

ALEXANDRA. No.

HYACINTH. Well, what was it he said that touched you so?

ALEXANDRA [*to HYACINTH*]. He said: "lad."

HYACINTH. Lad? [*She nods.*] What did he say "lad" for?

ALEXANDRA. He said he wasn't a lad any more to believe in fairy tales.

HYACINTH. Oh, *that* was it?

ALEXANDRA [*smiles happily as if in a dream*]. You know . . . I had always known the word, but I had never heard it spoken before. We say "boy," don't we? . . . And he, poor fellow, said "lad," with such a quaint lilt to it . . . so sweetly . . . I knew at once it was what they used to call him at home . . . what his family calls him to this very day. . . . And . . . I don't know why . . . but suddenly it seemed as if I, too, had been there . . . in the village where they called him "lad" . . . I saw the tiny, spotless cottages with acacia trees around them . . . and his mother . . . and his sister . . . who called him "lad" . . . and loved him, and were proud of him. . . . That was why.

[*There is a brief pause.*]

HYACINTH. Well, my boy—what do you say to that?

ALEXANDRA. Hyacinth, what did you call him?

HYACINTH. My lad . . . of course, that's what I meant.

ALEXANDRA. You dear!

[*Embraces him delightedly.*]

HYACINTH [*while she embraces him, to AGI*]. See that? I understand women.

AGI [*touched*]. She's beautiful . . . and good . . . I've forgiven her long ago.

ALEXANDRA. But I can't forgive myself. Never, never! [*With a start*]. What are we thinking? [*Suddenly*]. And poor mother . . .

[*She is about to rise.*]

HYACINTH. Stay, my child, I wouldn't go up to her now. Compose yourself first, and then we shall go up together.

AGI [*crosses to the table*]. Your mother was very cruel.

[*Sits at the place where HYACINTH had been sitting.*]

ALEXANDRA. I'm sorry for that, too. I'm sorry for everything now. And yet I'm so happy here. [*Embraces HYACINTH.*] And you are sweet . . . and good . . . and strong . . . and you understand one so well.

HYACINTH. The curious thing about you two is that I ought to be severe with you. . . . And I shall be severe with you. The moment you showed signs of getting out of control your mother dropped the reins. And now I must take them in hand. [*Very gravely; rises.*] This affair must end here, my dear children. It can't go any further. I trust you both realize that. Fortunately, you are both too clever not to realize it. I am very sorry. Sorry for you, too, my son. [*More severely, to AGI.*] Your conduct here to-day . . . Oh,

you needn't be so depressed about it. How can I go on when you look at me like that? Now, see here. [*Begins over again.*] Your conduct to-day was— [*His tone changes.*] I wish you wouldn't look at me so knowingly. It confuses me. You are just as bad as she is . . . [*To ALEXANDRA.*] . . . and you needn't look so pleased. You have no cause to. . . . This is unheard of! [*Walks a few paces.*] Unheard of! [*Comes to a standstill; bursts out angrily.*] You sit there. You don't say a word. You just look at me. And one can't say what one means. [*To AGI, beginning all over again.*] Your conduct to-night was . . . I must say— [*Cannot look AGI in the eye.*] I must say . . . it was really . . . quite justifiable. There! I've said it. [*To ALEXANDRA, crossly.*] Why do you look at me so affectionately?

ALEXANDRA [*delighted*]. You are looking at me affectionately, Hyacinth.

HYACINTH [*crossly*]. That's the worst of it. Yes, that's the worst of it. When I look at you, I . . . when I look at you . . . like this. . . . Unheard of! I look at you . . . and my heart aches for you. . . . But you . . . you children . . . you are young . . . unspoiled . . . and I . . . no, I wasn't born to be a judge. I try to be . . . but I try in vain. I can't . . . judge you. There you sit . . . two fine young people . . . and in such a desperate plight . . . but so happy in spite of it . . . you will never be as happy again. Happiness flies past like the wind. You have scarcely felt it before it is gone. . . . And then comes the reality, to which you will awake to-morrow morning . . . which will separate you, and

which will be for the best. . . . But it will hurt a little, my dear children. It will hurt . . . such things have happened before. . . . Even to me . . . when I wore a uniform. A long, long time ago. [*He turns away. There is a pause. He goes to the table, picks up his glass. Softly.*] To your happiness.

[*Raises the glass, sips the wine, sits at the place which AGI had occupied during supper. There is a pause during which ALEXANDRA and AGI sit motionless. CÆSAR enters quietly.*]

HYACINTH. What is it, my friend?

CÆSAR [*quietly*]. Her highness requests the Reverend Father to go and see her.

HYACINTH. At once?

CÆSAR. Her highness used the word "immediately."

HYACINTH. She would send for me now, just as I am beginning to enjoy my supper!

CÆSAR [*in consternation*]. Didn't the Reverend Father like the soup?

HYACINTH. Soup? [*Rises.*] Bitter, hot tea is what you gave me.

CÆSAR. Oh! Oh! Your reverence! What an error! Oh, I could kill myself.

HYACINTH. I forbid you to kill yourself, though I'm sure you had no such intention. And I'd forbid you to scold the unfortunate waiter who made the error, if I didn't know you'd do it anyhow. I'll be back directly, children.

ALEXANDRA [*rises*]. But Hyacinth! We can't stay here alone. Hadn't I better go with you?

CÆSAR. Her highness, the Princess Symphorosa, asked her highness,

your mother, whether she wanted to see your highness.

ALEXANDRA. What did she say?

CÆSAR. Her highness . . . so to speak . . . expressed herself . . . to the effect that—

ALEXANDRA. What did she say?

CÆSAR. Her highness said: "Let her keep out of my sight."

[*There is a pause. CÆSAR steps back and whispers to ALFRED.*]

HYACINTH. You see, my child! Just stay where you are while I speak to your mother. You needn't envy me the task. Then I shall come back and fetch you.

[*He exits at left. ALFRED exits.*]

[*There is a pause.*]

ALEXANDRA [*after the pause, during which she has repeatedly looked at AGI*]. Please . . . I don't even know your first name. What is it?

AGI. Hans.

ALEXANDRA. How old are you?

AGI. Twenty-nine.

ALEXANDRA. Where were you born?

AGI. In Transylvania.

ALEXANDRA. What district?

AGI [*in surprise*]. Your highness . . . at last we are left alone . . . and you ask me questions like a census taker.

ALEXANDRA [*embarrassed; helplessly*]. I want to know you. I want to hear all about you as quickly as possible. [*Almost in tears.*] But I don't know how to go about it.

AGI. Have you thought of to-morrow morning?

ALEXANDRA. I don't want to think about that yet. The few moments we have together now . . . mustn't be spoiled . . . for you or for me—

AGI. To-morrow they'll sweep me out like rubbish.

ALEXANDRA. And what if I don't let them, Hans?

AGI. Just the same, I shall go . . . just the same.

ALEXANDRA [*notices CÆSAR*]. What are you waiting for?

CÆSAR. For your orders, your highness.

ALEXANDRA [*comes toward him*]. There is nothing. You may go.

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness.

[*But he does not move.*]

ALEXANDRA. You may go.

CÆSAR. Leave the room, your highness?

ALEXANDRA. At once, Cæsar.

CÆSAR. Your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Yes?

CÆSAR. It appears that I myself served Father Hyacinth the tea instead of soup. But then so many extraordinary things have happened to-night, it is no wonder—

ALEXANDRA. You may go, Cæsar.

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness. I am certain the world is coming to an end, your highness.

[*He sobs and exits weeping at left. AGI goes to door through which CÆSAR made his exit, and remains standing there, looking at ALEXANDRA. There is a pause.*]

AGI [*after a glance into the ball-room*]. The ballroom is empty. The guests are leaving. [*Speaks softly with passionate warmth.*] And now we are quite alone, princess. Perhaps only for a few minutes . . . and then all that was beautiful in my life . . . will be gone.

ALEXANDRA [*trembling*]. I have never before . . . been alone with a man.

AGI [*comes toward her*]. Are you afraid of me?

ALEXANDRA. I don't know. But if it's fear . . . then I want always to be afraid.

AGI. The last time . . . perhaps the last moment I shall see you. Do you love me?

ALEXANDRA [*almost stammering; like a child*]. If it's love . . . then . . . it's just the same as . . . when I was a little girl . . . and the Emperor came. [*He regards her in astonishment.*] Yes . . . I had seen many portraits of the Emperor . . . with a golden crown on his head . . . in all his glitter and glory . . . and then once, when he visited us, in civilian clothes— [*Regretfully.*] I didn't recognize him.

AGI. My beautiful princess!

[*Comes nearer to her.*]

ALEXANDRA [*trembling*]. Don't come too near, Hans.

AGI. Are you so afraid of me?

[*Takes her hand.*]

ALEXANDRA [*draws back*]. I don't like . . . you to touch me. . . . How cold your hand is!

AGI. No. It's yours that's hot. What are you thinking that makes your hand tremble in mine?

ALEXANDRA. Of something reckless, and—

AGI. And of what?

ALEXANDRA. And of my rank, Hans. [*There is a pause. ALEXANDRA glances toward the table.*] Won't you have something to eat?

AGI. No.

ALEXANDRA. Why won't you eat?

AGI. I am not hungry. [*Turns to her ardently.*] I'm thirsty.

ALEXANDRA [*trembling*]. Will you drink something?

AGI. No. I am thirsty for you,

for your mouth and your eyes . . . and your voice . . .

ALEXANDRA [*terrified*]. You mustn't look at me like that!

AGI [*passionately*]. When I look into your eyes . . . we seem to be mounting together on the crest of a flame—

ALEXANDRA [*in alarm*]. What do you mean?

AGI. Upward . . . ever upward . . . higher . . . along the path . . .

ALEXANDRA [*alarmed, child-like*]. What path are you talking about?

AGI [*coming nearer to her*]. The path you pointed out to me. . . . Before, I lacked the courage to realize . . . that I am the rival of a king. But now I know it. And now I know I have won. Before, I only stammered, but now, now I want to sing . . . because I have triumphed, triumphed over every obstacle. . . . And now—

ALEXANDRA [*stares at him in terror*]. And now?

AGI. I know that to-morrow my triumph will be over. [*Takes her hands*]. But to-night, your highness, we shall see who is king, he or I!

ALEXANDRA [*faint with terror*]. You frighten me!

AGI. My silence should have frightened you more.

ALEXANDRA [*terrified*]. Now . . . you want to take your revenge . . .

AGI. I love you.

ALEXANDRA [*looks terror-stricken into his eyes*]. How you hate me now—

AGI. And I won't have you pity me! Soon they will all come back. Another minute and I'll be a servant again. A dismissed servant! Must it end like that? Can't I even make you arrogant again? Can't I make

you insult me . . . so that in my rage I may take you in my arms and carry you off . . . out into the night . . . among your roses . . . and kiss that haughty mouth . . .

[*He is about to embrace her.*]

ALEXANDRA [*terrified, but resisting him affectionately rather than resentfully*]. Hans! Hans!

[*There is a noise off left. They separate slowly. There is a pause. CÆSAR enters at left, leaving the double doors open behind him.*]

ALEXANDRA [*goes slowly toward him*]. What do you want?

CÆSAR. His highness, the Crown Prince, is preparing to retire. He has received a telegram. His mother, the Royal Princess Maria Dominica, is coming to-morrow morning.

ALEXANDRA. His mother? Coming here?

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness!

[*There is a long pause.*]

CÆSAR. I take the liberty to report that his highness, the Crown Prince, will shortly pass through this room.

ALEXANDRA [*nervously*]. Hyacinth isn't back yet . . . and we are here . . . like this . . . we two . . .

CÆSAR. If your highness should desire to go through the yellow room . . . there is still time.

[*He indicates the doors back left.*]

ALEXANDRA [*proudly*]. How dare you, Cæsar? Are you drunk?

CÆSAR [*tragically*]. No, your highness, I beg pardon, I'm sure. I've only gone out of my mind.

ALEXANDRA. That will do, Cæsar.

[*He bows and crosses to left.*]

[*There is a pause. Through the door at left come two*

lackeys bearing lighted candelabra. Behind them come ALBERT, WUNDERLICH and LUETZEN. The procession passes slowly across the stage. When ALBERT comes abreast of the table he stops, smiling. The two lackeys with the candelabra reach the door at right, open it and take their places on either side. WUNDERLICH and LUETZEN pause on the threshold.]

ALBERT [*unaffectedly pleasant*]. My dear Xara, how fortunate still to find you here and bid you good night. [*Extends his hand.*] I was to have gone to-morrow. But now I am happy to tell you that my mother arrives in the morning. Or did you know it?

ALEXANDRA. They told me, Albert. I am very glad.

ALBERT. She is extremely fond of you.

ALEXANDRA. I am fond of her, too, Albert, very.

ALBERT. Your mother has gone to bed. But she feels much better. She did a bit too much to-day. I warned her not to. But she is such a charming hostess, she wouldn't heed my advice.

[*HYACINTH enters at left, followed, a few moments later, by SYMPHOROSA. HYACINTH comes slowly into the room. SYMPHOROSA lingers in the doorway.*]

ALEXANDRA. Mother is never happier than when she is making her guests comfortable.

ALBERT. But one shouldn't overdo it. I have really reproached myself on her account. My mother will scold me for it, too. But, happily,

it's nothing serious. Good night, Xara.

[*Extends his hand to her. ALEXANDRA courtesies low.*]

ALBERT [*as if he had just noticed AGI*]. Ah, the professor! Good night, professor. Your discourse was very interesting . . . particularly the manner of delivery. . . . Very original, yes . . . a bit belligerent, but original. As her highness was taken ill so suddenly, I hadn't the opportunity to offer my very humble comment. I would never have supposed that you could be such an insubordinate young fool.

ALEXANDRA [*uneasily, forcing a smile*]. Albert, you are mistaken—

ALBERT. No, no, these astronomical impertinences are very interesting. [*To HYACINTH.*] He sat down with us quite unassumingly and then with a flourish he lifted us up to the sky . . . and he stayed up there . . . and dropped me with a thud. . . . [*To AGI.*] But you spoke with spirit. Very smart. . . . Always higher, higher—

ALEXANDRA. Pardon me, but your sarcastic criticism is unjust, Albert. He is not like us.

ALBERT. I noticed that.

ALEXANDRA [*more and more excitedly*]. He is a scientist; he is a free spirit. . . . He has the right to speak more freely than we . . .

ALBERT. You defend his bad manners just as graciously as you suffered them a while ago. You are a brave and clever girl—a perfect martyr. I have just learned from your mother that you . . . [*Sarcastically.*] were the innocent target of certain unwelcome attentions . . . and that you have endured them

with such patience, such goodness . . .

ALEXANDRA [*very agitated; looks from ALBERT to AGI in fear that they will quarrel*]. Mother is mistaken, Albert. And you judge him wrongly. You don't understand him.

ALBERT [*ironically*]. It is not easy to understand him.

ALEXANDRA [*excitedly*]. You can't possibly understand him. [ALBERT *laughs mockingly*.] Don't laugh at him, Albert. He is a scientist and a poet. . . . He is an astronomer.

ALBERT. An ill-bred little astronomer.

AGI [*with a threatening movement*]. Your highness!

ALEXANDRA [*trembling with excitement; passionately*]. Albert, you are going too far. You must not say that.

ALBERT. But he is.

ALEXANDRA. I won't have him insulted . . . like this—

AGI [*to ALBERT*]. Your highness, I—

ALBERT [*quite composed*]. You are an impertinent little upstart. [*With a little shriek of dismay ALEXANDRA throws herself in front of AGI. She is highly excited.*] Don't answer him, Hans. [*Looks at him.*] I forbid it. [*Raises her voice.*] Hans!

[*For a moment she hesitates, looks at ALBERT, then throws*

herself on AGI, embraces him passionately, kisses him and rests a moment against his chest. On the thresholds of the four doors the people stand as follows: At left, SYMPHOROSA; at right, two lackeys with candles, and LUETZEN; back right, WUNDERLICH alone. At the moment of the kiss they all withdraw slowly. HYACINTH does not go. He only takes a few steps backwards. ALEXANDRA releases AGI, stands a moment stiff and staring, then leans half fainting against the edge of the table.]

ALBERT [*lightly, softly, ironically*]. Oh! That's different. Quite different. In that case . . . I beg your pardon, professor. [*Makes a military bow to ALEXANDRA and AGI.*] Good night.

[*He exits at right. There is a pause. SYMPHOROSA enters at left and leads the half-swooning ALEXANDRA gently, tenderly, off back left. When they both have gone, HYACINTH approaches AGI gravely, almost threateningly, stops in front of him and kisses him suddenly. Smiling graciously, HYACINTH hurries off at left. AGI stares after him, as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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ACT THREE

[*Early morning of the following day. A salon of the guest suite assigned to MARIA DOMINICA. Doors at right and left. At back, on the left, is the entrance from the hallway.*

When the curtain rises SYMPHOROSA is speaking to the CHAMBERMAID.]

SYMPHOROSA. We do not know how soon her highness Maria

Dominica may arrive. Her telegram said this morning, but there is no train in the morning, so she must be coming by motor. That means we may look for her at any moment.

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, your highness.

[BEATRICE *enters at left.*]

SYMPHOROSA [*hurries to her and embraces her*]. Darling . . . why are you up so early? It's barely seven o'clock. There, there! . . . Do you feel better?

BEATRICE [*unhappily*]. I haven't slept. I never closed an eye, I was so restless. . . . Is the guest suite ready?

CHAMBERMAID. Everything is in perfect order.

BEATRICE [*tearfully*]. The bath?

CHAMBERMAID. We have just lit the fire. The water will be warm in half an hour.

[*At a nod from BEATRICE she exits at right.*]

BEATRICE. Is she to have these three rooms?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes. This salon—[*Points to the right.*—and that one; the bedroom with the dressing-room; and the bath.

[BEATRICE *dries her eyes.*]

SYMPHOROSA. Don't cry, dear. The good Lord will help us.

BEATRICE. Only He *can* help us now. When does Dominica arrive?

SYMPHOROSA. Can't tell exactly. She is coming by motor.

BEATRICE. If she had only come yesterday—even yesterday evening—

SYMPHOROSA [*sighs*]. Ah, yes . . .

BEATRICE. This beautiful summer day! And to think that it is the most tragic day of my life! Could you ever have believed that Maria Dominica would be on her way to

ask my daughter's hand in marriage with her son . . . and I awaiting her in tears?

[*Weeps.*]

SYMPHOROSA. My dear!

[*Embraces her.*]

BEATRICE. How *is* Albert?

SYMPHOROSA. He is asleep.

BEATRICE. Fortunate man! And Alexandra?

SYMPHOROSA. She came down at six, and went riding. Alone. I hear you talked with her last night.

BEATRICE. Yes. She came to my bedside at three o'clock. Oh, that I had been spared that interview!

SYMPHOROSA. Was she disrespectful?

BEATRICE. No, she was repentant. She told me everything—everything that happened.

SYMPHOROSA. The very last thing, too?

BEATRICE. If only she hadn't told me that!

SYMPHOROSA. What did you say to her?

BEATRICE. Not a word. I wasn't able to. My whole body turned to ice.

SYMPHOROSA. What did she do?

BEATRICE. Kissed my hand and went out. I haven't seen her since. [*A brief pause.*] That man—is he still here?

SYMPHOROSA. He is here—but—

BEATRICE [*explosively*]. He is here?

SYMPHOROSA. Yes, but—

BEATRICE. There is no *but* which can justify his being here still.

SYMPHOROSA. . . . But he is packing his trunk.

BEATRICE [*to the CHAMBERMAID who has entered at right*]. Well?

CHAMBERMAID. Your highness, a

motor is entering the grounds. You can see it from the window. There are two ladies in it.

BEATRICE. Now my Calvary begins. Symphorosa—don't leave me. Where is Hyacinth?

SYMPHOROSA. Gone out for a walk.

BEATRICE. I don't want to see him. Last night I sent for him to give him a scolding.

SYMPHOROSA. Yes?

BEATRICE. And he scolded me instead. Let him keep out of my sight.

SYMPHOROSA. Why are you so angry with him?

BEATRICE. Because he was right.

CÆSAR [*enters at left*]. Your highness, the motor has driven up.

BEATRICE. We're coming, we're coming.

[*She exits quickly with SYMPHOROSA.* CÆSAR *exits at back.*

The door remains open. Off stage their voices are heard in an exchange of greetings.

DOMINICA *enters with BEATRICE and SYMPHOROSA.* *She wears a motoring coat. Behind her comes the COUNTESS, who helps her off with the coat, hat and veil and gives them to the CHAMBERMAID, who exits at right, taking the things with her.]*

DOMINICA [*animatedly continuing the conversation begun outside*]. . . . simply by starting at four this morning, my dear. I'm not fond of traveling by day in the summertime. I can't endure the heat. The car ran beautifully . . . barely three hours . . . and the distance is over two hundred kilometers.

BEATRICE. Well, what time did you rise?

DOMINICA. At half-past two. While you were still dancing here.

[*BEATRICE sighs.*]

SYMPHOROSA. What an energetic woman you are, Dominica! How youthful!

DOMINICA [*with spiritual fervor*]. There is nothing I can't be . . . for my son. [*BEATRICE sighs.*] That's the second time you have sighed.

BEATRICE. I was thinking of my poor dear husband. How fond he was of you.

DOMINICA. I was fond of him, too . . . very.

BEATRICE. Symphorosa, will you go and see that everything is ready? We hadn't expected you so early.

DOMINICA. I didn't telegraph the hour of my arrival because you never can be sure when you are motoring. But I don't mind waiting. [*Sits.*] What a joy it is to sit down again without having a landscape rushing past you!

SYMPHOROSA. Excuse me, dear, while I see that everything has been made comfortable for you.

[*She exits at right.*]

BEATRICE. Will you have breakfast now?

DOMINICA. Later, thank you. We had some tea before we started. If you please, Countess, tell Luetzen he is not to awaken my son on my account, not before his accustomed hour. [*The COUNTESS exits at right.*] I hear you were up late last night, dissipating with Albert. He likes that.

BEATRICE. Oh . . . he is so gracious . . . so easy to entertain . . .

DOMINICA. Don't be modest. I daresay you contrived all sorts of schemes to amuse and entertain him.

BEATRICE [*bitterly*]. We did our best, of course.

DOMINICA. And now, my dear, let us come to the point. I am a simple, practical woman, you know. They haven't nicknamed me "the cook" in Vienna for nothing.

BEATRICE. Oh!

DOMINICA. Tut, tut! I know that's what they call me, and I am proud of it. But, first of all, give me a nice kiss. [*They stand up and kiss.*] That's right! [*They sit.*] And now to business. You realize why I am here.

BEATRICE. Oh, Dominica!

DOMINICA. In a word: My son wishes to marry your daughter.

[*They rise again, kiss, and sit down. BEATRICE weeps.*]

DOMINICA. Don't cry, Beatrice. This is nothing to cry about.

BEATRICE. No, certainly not . . . but I am so overwhelmed.

DOMINICA. Compose yourself, dear. Albert telegraphed me yesterday that he didn't trust himself to speak to you about Alexandra without me. You know he never makes a step without me.

BEATRICE. A good, dutiful son.

DOMINICA. Yes, so he is. [*Majestically.*] Happy the people who get such a king. . . . But there! He asked me to come at once so that he might tell her how enchanted he is with her.

[*Both rise, embrace and kiss each other, then sit down.*]

BEATRICE. Oh, my dear Dominica!

DOMINICA. I don't wonder. She is such a perfect creature—beautiful, good, clever and queenly. That is what I admire most about her—her proud, imperious ways.

BEATRICE. How nice of you to say so!

DOMINICA. Haven't you noticed that in the past ten years our young women have become infected with a certain rather vulgar freedom of manner, imported from foreign countries? Not she. She is grave, majestic, aloof, perhaps a bit too aloof . . . I mean a bit too cold toward her inferiors.

BEATRICE. Cold? Oh, I wouldn't say that.

DOMINICA. That is precisely what I admire in her.

BEATRICE. She has altered of late. She is quite warm to her inferiors now.

DOMINICA. To think that the desire of my sainted husband is at last to be fulfilled! This marriage, you know, was his—

BEATRICE. His most cherished wish.

[*Sighs.*]

DOMINICA. I am very happy, Beatrice, that the obstacles which lay in the way of this marriage are vanished. Now Albert can follow the call of his heart.

[*She sighs deeply.*]

BEATRICE. Now it's you who sighed.

DOMINICA. I don't deny it, Beatrice. It is no great credit to our diplomats that my son must marry for love. It grieves me to think that the incompetence of our diplomats should compel my son to follow the call of his heart.

BEATRICE. Perhaps he'll be happier for it.

DOMINICA. If we had had a Metternich, Albert might have been very unhappy, but then there would have been a real marriage. Don't be

angry at my candor. . . . One's Family, you know! . . . We are not what we are—to strive for *personal* happiness.

BEATRICE. Alas, no.

DOMINICA. If you knew what Albert has gone through. First that Russian girl, Olga Constantinovna . . .

BEATRICE. Oh, I know. And then the English girl, Patricia.

DOMINICA. You know that, too?

BEATRICE. I have followed his political career with the utmost interest. And then, in Dresden, came Leopoldine Charlotte . . . the fat one.

DOMINICA. How well you know everything! From there he went to Portugal.

BEATRICE. In the middle of July . . . Silvina Gonzaga, that odious Infanta.

DOMINICA. Odious? That doesn't describe her. Perhaps there is a word for it in Portuguese. In any case "odious" is quite inadequate. And then came that amazing affair with Marie Hermine in Brussels.

BEATRICE. She is fully two heads taller than Albert.

DOMINICA. Yes. But we never knew it because she had always sent us bust portraits.

BEATRICE. Yes, I know.

DOMINICA. How perfectly charming of you to *know* everything!

BEATRICE. Oh, well, you see, I have regarded Albert as one of the family ever since he was a child.

[HYACINTH *enters at back*.]

HYACINTH. Welcome, Dominica.

[*Embraces her*.]

DOMINICA. Karl!

HYACINTH [*crosses to BEATRICE, kisses her on the forehead*]. Good morning, Beatrice. You are looking splendid, Dominica.

DOMINICA. You, of all people! Are you here for a holiday?

HYACINTH. Only for a few days. But perhaps I am interrupting your—

DOMINICA. Not at all. Well, here I am, and you know why I am here.

HYACINTH. And I am delighted.

[*Takes her hand; kisses it*.]

DOMINICA. We were just talking of how my poor son had been tossed about by the exigencies of politics before he arrived at last in the calm, happy harbor of your dear family. Olga Constantinovna—

HYACINTH. Of the blue eyes. A magnificent girl.

DOMINICA. Do you know her?

HYACINTH. I danced with her mother in Munich.

DOMINICA. Odd to hear you say that.

HYACINTH. Oh, in those days—

DOMINICA. She really was a beautiful girl. But politics, you know. And when King Edward left Marienbad that ended all hope of an alliance with England. Whereupon the English princess began studying the Bulgarian language—with an eye to the Bulgarian crown prince.

HYACINTH. What did Albert do?

DOMINICA. We sent him on a trip into Africa to heal his broken heart.

BEATRICE. And Patricia learned to speak Bulgarian.

DOMINICA. Fluently. But nothing came of that, either. She was married in Sweden to Prince Olaf. Now, with all her Bulgarian erudition, she lives among the Swedes. I hear that the Bulgarian minister to Stockholm is delirious with joy because she always speaks Bulgarian with him. And out of that, between Sweden and Bulgaria . . . came an enormous

trade in pig iron. To this day the good Bulgarians do not dream to what they owe all that iron.

BEATRICE. And don't you know why nothing came of the Bulgarian marriage?

DOMINICA. I understand that the Serbs thwarted Delcassé's schemes.

BEATRICE. That is the official explanation. The real reason is more interesting. Patricia's family sent Arthur and the Bulgarian Court sent Philip for a final conference. As you know, Arthur can't hear a thing with his left ear, and Philip is totally deaf in his right ear. At the Court dinner, where the conference was to take place, they were seated side by side, in the order that rank and etiquette demanded, so that each had his deaf ear turned to the other. But neither of them realized it. In the beginning each spoke a few words, but receiving no answer, became offended and said no more. Both of them went home in a rage and that is how Patricia came to be a Swedish princess, and why there is so much pig iron in Bulgaria to-day.

HYACINTH. I never heard that story before. And so, Dominica, you are taking our little girl away from us.

DOMINICA. Yes, Karl. Is she still asleep?

BEATRICE. No. She went riding early this morning.

DOMINICA. When can I see her?

BEATRICE [*in a panic*]. When can you see her? . . . Ah-h-h . . . God! [*She is greatly distressed; presses her hand to her forehead.*] My head . . . Oh!

[*Sways weakly.*]

HYACINTH [*forcibly*]. My dear, I

beg of you, I sincerely urge you not to be ill; I forbid you to be ill.

DOMINICA. What's the matter with you, dear?

BEATRICE. It started last night . . . at supper . . . a sudden weak spell. . . .

HYACINTH. It was very inconsiderate of you.

BEATRICE. But, Karl—

DOMINICA. If you really don't feel well—

HYACINTH. What if she *doesn't* feel well? I don't feel so well myself just now. I forbid you to faint. . . . Sit down.

[*With an expression of dread,*

BEATRICE *sits.*]

DOMINICA [*goes to her in alarm*]. But what is the matter?

HYACINTH [*restraining her*]. I shall tell you, Dominica.

BEATRICE [*terrified; quavering*]. Karl! Karl!

HYACINTH. Peace! Let me speak now. Dominica, you are regarded—and not without reason—as the cleverest woman in Europe.

DOMINICA. But, Karl!

HYACINTH. Now don't be modest. You'll be needing all your cleverness in a moment. For we have a bit of a difficulty here. I don't consider it so, but Beatrice, apprehensive as usual, does. . . . Something has happened, Dominica.

DOMINICA. Jesus and Mary! Not to Alexandra?

HYACINTH. There! Didn't I say she was the cleverest woman in—

DOMINICA. Something has happened . . . to Alexandra?

HYACINTH. No, but almost.

BEATRICE [*terrified*]. Karl!

DOMINICA. Good heavens!

HYACINTH. I implore you, don't you faint, too.

DOMINICA. Karl! You terrify me.

HYACINTH. On the contrary, I am reassuring you.

DOMINICA. What happened, in heaven's name?

HYACINTH. Simply this—that since Albert came here he has conducted himself like a fish.

DOMINICA. Like a fish?

[DOMINICA is sitting at left, BEATRICE at right, and HYACINTH stands between them.]

BEATRICE. How can you say such a thing?

HYACINTH. It is true. He was cold and mute.

DOMINICA. Poor Albert! That was on my account. He wanted me to be here before he—

HYACINTH. No one in the world could have suspected that. Least of all, Alexandra, who was quite attracted by him and who was deeply wounded by his indifference.

DOMINICA. Did he make it as conspicuous as that?

HYACINTH. It couldn't possibly have been more conspicuous. He is a very good son, but a very bad marriage candidate. Just the same, your son is idolized here. Both by the girl and by her good mother.

[His gesture indicates BEATRICE.]

DOMINICA. You dear, sweet—

BEATRICE. Oh, Dominica, if you only knew . . . if you only knew—

HYACINTH. And amid all this adoration he strutted like a . . . like a . . .

DOMINICA. Fish.

HYACINTH. Worse than that! The girl didn't sleep . . . wept all night long . . .

DOMINICA. How terrible!

HYACINTH. And we all suffered with her . . . her mother, I, the boys, the professor.

DOMINICA [*suspiciously*]. What professor?

HYACINTH [*mopping his brow*]. That's just it. [*With a glance at BEATRICE.*] There is a teacher here, a tutor to the boys. A nice, cultured straightforward young man. And he . . . well . . . toward the end . . . when every one was desperate . . . an extraordinary thing occurred, which was, indeed, only another proof of the adoration in which your son—

BEATRICE [*terrified; beseechingly*]. Karl!

DOMINICA. Go on.

HYACINTH. With characteristic feminine logic it was deemed expedient to invite the professor to last night's reception . . . in order to stimulate Albert's interest a bit. A stupid idea, of course . . . but from it you can glean the somewhat ecstatic regard in which your son is held here.

DOMINICA. What a charming, naïve idea!

HYACINTH. Wasn't it? [*Flashes BEATRICE a triumphant glance.*] Yes, and then came something which hadn't been reckoned with. This professor—a fine, a serious, a most estimable young man—it appeared that he—think of it—that he had been secretly in love with Alexandra.

[*In terror BEATRICE rises. There is a brief pause.*]

DOMINICA [*emphatically*]. Such things happen.

[*Reassured, BEATRICE sits down.*]

HYACINTH [*with a triumphant glance at BEATRICE*]. Yes, and no wonder. He sees her every day. She

is beautiful. The rest was inevitable. Think of all those ancient romances of the Tutor and the Princess—

DOMINICA. What then?

HYACINTH. Put yourself in this poor young man's place. Though desperately in love, he lends himself to this innocent deception, knowing, poor fellow, that he is only a means to an end.

DOMINICA. It was all Albert's fault. Why did he hesitate to speak? I consider his reticence exaggerated under the circumstances.

HYACINTH. Remember it was out of consideration for you. Really, Albert's devotion to you borders on the fantastic.

DOMINICA. After all, it *is* gratifying. [*With tears in her eyes.*] Well, and then?

HYACINTH [*mopping his brow*]. Well, as I said, this young man sat down to supper with me . . . this martyr . . . I really must call him that . . . this wretched human sacrifice . . . and there at the table he endured such tortures that tears came to my eyes, watching him.

DOMINICA. I don't wonder. It is really quite touching.

HYACINTH. And the poor girl, who is tender-hearted as she can be, could not bear to see him suffer so . . . and she would have sent him away . . . but the professor . . . solely for the sake of the family . . . solely for Alexandra's sake . . . solely for the sake of your son's happiness . . . the professor played the comedy through, though his heart was bleeding. . . .

DOMINICA. Poor fellow. . . .

HYACINTH. . . . Until Albert, who

knew nothing of all this, insulted him.

DOMINICA [*horrified*]. The professor?

HYACINTH. Yes, him.

DOMINICA. This poor young man?

HYACINTH. This poor young man. Think of it!

DOMINICA. What did Albert do?

HYACINTH. He called him an impertinent little upstart.

DOMINICA. Terrible! And didn't you interfere?

HYACINTH. How could I?

DOMINICA. What did the young man do?

HYACINTH. What could he do? He bowed his head. I thought my heart would break.

DOMINICA. Poor, brave fellow! And what did Alexandra say?

HYACINTH [*mopping his brow*]. I am glad that you, too, are sorry for this nice young man.

DOMINICA. What did Alexandra do?

HYACINTH. You are not only clever but sympathetic as well.

DOMINICA. And Alexandra?

HYACINTH. If you could only have seen him standing there, this poor, industrious scientist. . . . Would you believe it? An astronomer! With his hopeless, despairing, inarticulate love; with his shattered romance; with his bleeding heart . . . and Albert insulting him with cold, withering elegance. . . . And there he stood with bowed head . . . disgraced irreparably . . . annihilated . . . after he had made such a sacrifice for the family. . . . Can you picture it? Such loyalty—and such a martyrdom? *You* tell me, as a woman, is such a young man not noble?

DOMINICA [*emphatically*]. Most noble!

HYACINTH [*rhetorically*]. Is he the sort of young man who should be driven out? Is he the sort who should be despised?

DOMINICA. Certainly not.

HYACINTH [*with increasing fervor*]. Is he the sort who should be insulted? Who should be mistreated? Who should be punished?

DOMINICA. God forbid.

HYACINTH [*still more impassioned*]. Again I ask you: Does such a young man deserve to be driven away? To be insulted? To be mistreated? Or does he deserve . . . to . . . what shall I say? . . . to . . . I don't know myself . . . he deserves . . . to . . . to—

DOMINICA. To be kissed!

HYACINTH. Yes, that is just what happened to him. [*Sinks weakly into a chair; mops his brow; murmurs to himself.*] I thought she'd never say it.

DOMINICA [*taken aback*]. Eh? . . . What happened to him?

HYACINTH. Just what you said. Alexandra kissed him.

DOMINICA. Alexandra?

HYACINTH. As you said.

DOMINICA. I? Yes. Um, yes.

HYACINTH. After Albert insulted him she couldn't stand by and see him suffer any longer. She kissed him, in mine and Albert's presence.

DOMINICA. And what did Albert do?

HYACINTH. How could he, poor chap, understand what was going on? Naturally, he didn't see it all as clearly as you see it now.

DOMINICA [*without conviction*]. I? Yes . . . yes . . . of course.

HYACINTH. And Beatrice . . .

who is such a stickler for form . . . sits here worrying herself almost to death [*Turns to BEATRICE.*] about something which Dominica, as you see, finds perfectly natural—yes, almost inevitable. Isn't it so?

DOMINICA [*without conviction*]. Certainly, certainly.

HYACINTH. It was a charming gesture on Alexandra's part. I am truly proud that throughout the entire episode she conducted herself just as you yourself would have done. We may all be proud of her.

[*As he speaks BEATRICE gives him furtive, grateful glances.*]

DOMINICA. A splendid girl. A girl of spirit! [*Majestically.*] Happy the people who get such a queen.

HYACINTH. . . . And if you want to know—I kissed the poor fellow myself.

DOMINICA. You were right. Louis XVI, after his wife's recovery from a dangerous confinement, kissed a nurse. [*Emphatically.*] Such things happen. [*After a brief pause.*] So that was the terrible thing?

HYACINTH. Yes, that was it. [*Points to BEATRICE.*] She fainted dead away. But she . . . she was angry with the professor anyhow.

BEATRICE [*quite reassured now*]. I? I look upon it in the same light as Dominica does. Only I wasn't sure she would see it the way I did.

HYACINTH. She is angry with the tutor on account of Napoleon. He teaches the boys that—

DOMINICA. Can't you bear him, either, this Napoleon?

HYACINTH. She loathes him!

DOMINICA. Dear, in my sainted husband's library there is a curiosity,—a little French book which proves quite conclusively that Napoleon

never lived. I'll send it to you. Read it. It is most comforting. . . . There . . . dearest. . . . So that was your tragic difficulty.

BEATRICE. Yes, you clever, practical darling.

DOMINICA. Poor little tutor! Now he is beginning to interest me. What is to become of him?

BEATRICE. He is packing. Oh, he feels that, after what has happened, he cannot stay on here another moment.

DOMINICA. He is quite right. But are you letting him go like that?

BEATRICE. Well, you see, my dear . . . he is now . . . the poor fellow is now like an exploded cartridge.

DOMINICA. One must be very careful with cartridges. It is just such people who become writers of memoirs, American lecturers or publicists for the opposition party. One cannot be too careful. I have had painful experiences in such matters. Tutors, adjutants. . . . I shall speak to him myself.

BEATRICE. Thank you, you clever darling.

DOMINICA. Had I been here I should have warned you in the first place not to trifle with a tutor. A tutor near a princess is as dangerous as a lighted match near a tin of gasoline. And, in any case, there was no need for all this haste. Had you waited one day more . . . then I'd have been here. There is an old English proverb which says: "Act in haste and repent at your leisure."

HYACINTH [*significantly*]. In England!

DOMINICA. Now then . . . when can I see this tutor?

[*The CHAMBERMAID enters at right.*]

BEATRICE. At once. Is everything ready?

CHAMBERMAID. Yes, your highness.

BEATRICE. Send Cæsar to me here.

[*The COUNTESS and SYMPHOROSA enter at right.*]

SYMPHOROSA. Everything is ready now, Dominica, dear; and there is a surprise for you in there.

DOMINICA. Nothing will surprise me now, dear Symphorosa.

SYMPHOROSA. This will, I think. Albert is awaiting you in the drawing-room.

DOMINICA. Albert? Up this early? On my account! You are right, dear. This is a most joyful surprise. I'm coming. [*As she goes.*] Meantime, bring this professor to me here.

BEATRICE. I shall arrange it at once. But I am afraid you will find him difficult.

HYACINTH. And I'll wager that you won't find him difficult at all.

DOMINICA. Karl, I haven't wagered since 1886, when I bet my sainted husband that I would give birth to a boy.

HYACINTH. And it was a girl?

DOMINICA. Two, Karl; two at a time. Come, Countess.

[*She exits at right. SYMPHOROSA and the COUNTESS follow her.*]

HYACINTH and BEATRICE look at each other in silence. He smiles triumphantly]

BEATRICE. You have a good heart, Karl, and a good head. [*Kisses him on the brow.*] There is but one thing I am still afraid of—

HYACINTH. In heaven's name, what now?

BEATRICE. When she speaks to

her son in there . . . won't he have a different opinion about it all?

HYACINTH. There are two reasons why he won't have a different opinion. In the first place, he won't be such a fool as to disagree with his mamma; and in the second place, I mean to be present at the interview.

[*Starts to go.*]

BEATRICE [*hurries after him*]. Karl, dear . . . wait. . . . I have been very unfair to you. . . . What can I do to make you forgive me?

HYACINTH [*at the door, right*]. All I ask of you is never to fall on my neck again. To-morrow you will write those words in a copy book one hundred times: "Old brooms sometimes sweep clean."

[*He exits.*]

BEATRICE. No manners at all. [*CÆSAR enters at back.*] Cæsar! You will go downstairs and ask Dr. Agi if he will be good enough to come up at once and wait in this room. Her highness, the Princess Dominica, wishes to speak to him.

CÆSAR. Very good, your highness.

BEATRICE. What are you serving her highness for breakfast?

CÆSAR. Tea, cold salmon, cold beef, cold chicken . . . cold . . .

BEATRICE. Cæsar! Why, that is last night's supper. . . .

CÆSAR. I beg pardon, your highness. It is this morning's breakfast. I had it put on the table at one this morning, and no one has eaten a bite of it yet.

BEATRICE. Have you lost your senses, Cæsar?

CÆSAR. Quite likely, your highness. . . . Another breakfast will be served.

BEATRICE. Why are you so pale?

CÆSAR. I didn't sleep well, your

highness. I suffered agonies. Mostly on account of the tea.

BEATRICE. On account of what tea?

CÆSAR. On account of the terrible mistake. Father Hyacinth was served the hot tea and your highness got the cold consommé.

BEATRICE. I am glad I did. I would have fainted away in that horrible moment if I hadn't had that sip of ice-cold soup. It revived me.

CÆSAR. Thank you, your highness. You have taken a great load off my mind.

BEATRICE. You are not to punish the man who made the mistake.

CÆSAR. No, your highness. Perhaps you would wish me to give him a little reward?

BEATRICE. Let us not go to extremes. . . . The professor is to wait here.

[*She exits at right. CÆSAR goes to the door at left, but it opens and ALEXANDRA enters.*]

ALEXANDRA. Has the princess arrived?

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Where is she?

CÆSAR. In there, your highness. [*Points to right.*] I believe she is changing her clothes after her long motor ride.

ALEXANDRA. And what are you doing here?

CÆSAR. I have been told to summon—

[*Stops.*]

ALEXANDRA. To summon whom?

CÆSAR [*reluctantly*]. Professor Agi.

ALEXANDRA [*sharply*]. What do they want of Professor Agi?

CÆSAR. He is to come up here and wait.

ALEXANDRA. Very good. Send him up.

[*She sits.*]

CÆSAR. But . . . if your highness pleases . . . I am to send Mr. Agi up here to wait for—

ALEXANDRA. Professor Agi.

CÆSAR. Professor Agi up here to wait for her highness, who wishes to speak with him.

ALEXANDRA. Just do as you were told. Send Professor Agi up.

CÆSAR. Yes, your highness.

[*He exits at back. After a brief pause Agi enters, dressed for traveling.*]

AGI. Your highness sent for me?

ALEXANDRA. No. But I waited here because I learned that you had been sent for.

AGI. Is there anything your highness wanted?

ALEXANDRA. What sort of costume is that you are wearing?

AGI. A traveling costume.

ALEXANDRA. You are going away?

AGI. Yes. [*There is a pause.*]

Is there anything your highness wanted?

ALEXANDRA. And what is to become of the boys?

AGI. I don't know.

ALEXANDRA. Aren't you sorry to leave them?

AGI. Indeed. . . . I am very sorry. [*A pause.*] Is there anything your highness wanted?

ALEXANDRA. Princess Maria Dominica, the mother of the Crown Prince, has come.

AGI. I know.

ALEXANDRA. And do you know why she has come?

AGI. I know that, too.

ALEXANDRA. Well? [*A pause.*] Sit down, please.

AGI. Thank you.

[*He does not sit.*]

ALEXANDRA [*she rises*]. I haven't spoken with the Princess yet. I haven't even seen her yet. Perhaps within the next few minutes we shall meet. And then . . . she will tell me why she has come.

AGI. Yes.

[*There is a pause.*]

ALEXANDRA. Is that all you have to say about it?

AGI. Practically.

ALEXANDRA. I don't understand this mocking tone!

AGI. Not mocking, only incredulous. I am not a boy any more, to believe in fairy tales.

ALEXANDRA [*with significance*]. . . . Boy?

AGI. Yes, your highness, not a boy.

ALEXANDRA [*regarding him sternly, reproachfully*]. What is this attitude you have assumed toward me?

AGI. One of utmost deference, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Why this pretense? Have you forgotten what happened last night?

AGI. I have forgotten, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Have you? And have you also forgotten what I—

AGI. I have forgotten that, too, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. Was it so easy to forget?

AGI. I didn't say that.

ALEXANDRA. If I had known—

AGI. You must have known.

ALEXANDRA. That you would forget?

AGI. I . . . must forget, and your highness must deny it . . . and . . . he must not remember it.

ALEXANDRA. He shall remember it, and I don't deny it. But I see that what I gave you was too precious. More precious than you deserve. Perhaps . . . a kingdom.

AGI. That is not so precious. I know of one that was offered in exchange for a horse.

ALEXANDRA. You even insult me! You speak like a sullen child.

AGI. No, your highness . . . what I am saying, what I am doing, my departure to-day . . . these are my answer to your highness' kiss.

ALEXANDRA. I hadn't expected you to utter that word.

AGI. Uttering it doesn't hurt. The kiss itself was much more painful.

ALEXANDRA [*cuttingly*]. More painful for you than for me?

AGI. Oh, yes. It made me feel your profound pity for me, and also your utter contempt. It was a supercilious thing to do. It implied that I was not a human being at all . . . that I could be treated . . . like a child or a pet animal.

ALEXANDRA. Is that the way you took it?

AGI. If I hadn't taken it like that—

ALEXANDRA. Then what?

AGI. Then I should be kissing you still.

ALEXANDRA [*resentfully*]. I see it was all a stupid mistake on my part.

AGI. It was too much, your highness . . . too much at a time. That is why it was unconvincing.

ALEXANDRA. Unconvincing?

AGI. Yes. For we hadn't reached that stage . . . and yet . . . suddenly you had kissed me. . . . Afterwards . . . I went out into the garden . . .

and wandered about . . . for a long time . . . not among the roses . . . but out under the oaks where the morning breeze was unscented and cool. . . . There . . . at daybreak . . . I grew calmer . . . and could weigh and consider. . . . And I felt like a beggar into whose hat some one had tossed a thousand crown note instead of a copper . . . and who must, in all honesty, run after the giver and offer it back.

ALEXANDRA. I am glad to see that you know your place so well.

AGI. It is morning, your highness. The sun is shining.

ALEXANDRA. And not the stars.

AGI. No, no; not the stars.

ALEXANDRA [*nervously*]. I am very glad of it.

AGI. And I, because you are glad.

ALEXANDRA. I am very glad of it. It is better like this.

AGI. We can't make it better.

[*There is a brief pause. HYACINTH enters at right. AGI bows.*]

HYACINTH. Well, my son, at last you are here. The Princess wants to talk to you. Yes, and the Crown Prince, too.

AGI. The Crown Prince?

HYACINTH. He would like to make amends for . . . that unfortunate misunderstanding of yesterday.

AGI. Forgive me, Father . . . but I must ask them to excuse me. I am leaving. My box is already on the wagon.

HYACINTH. And you proposed to leave us without farewells?

AGI. I have just said good-bye to her highness.

ALEXANDRA. Yes, and in a most extraordinary way.

HYACINTH. How?

ALEXANDRA. Coldly. Sullenly. As if I had insulted him.

HYACINTH. Well, isn't that interesting? This is the second time he has divined my thoughts. Yes, you did insult him, my child. Certainly you hurt his vanity . . . perhaps also his self-respect . . . with that kindly little kiss. That is what you mean—isn't it, my son?

AGI. Yes, Father.

ALEXANDRA. A tragic moment like that . . . and you call it a kindly little kiss!

HYACINTH [*to AGI*]. You have your athletic habits to thank for this wisdom, this healthy clarity of judgment.

ALEXANDRA. And the things he said yesterday . . . about his life and his death and his immortality . . . were they all untrue?

HYACINTH. Don't you see? Sudden anguish seeks expression in the strongest language. That is why common people, for instance, become profane in such moments.

ALEXANDRA. Is that all it meant?

HYACINTH. All? That is a great deal, my daughter, for it manifests a profound sorrow. An exclamation of pain, as it were, in which the words are not important.

ALEXANDRA. Which of his words shall I believe then?

HYACINTH. The ones he leaves unspoken now. [*A brief pause.*] Well, and you, my daughter? Now! Be candid.

ALEXANDRA. I, Hyacinth? . . . If I am to be candid, I believe I love him a little.

[*Puts her head on his shoulder.*]

HYACINTH. I myself thought you loved him . . . until you kissed him.

ALEXANDRA. You say that, too? I don't understand any of you. Is there anything the matter with me?

HYACINTH. No, my child.

ALEXANDRA. And you don't believe it was love, either?

AGI. No, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. But I—

HYACINTH. You don't understand yourself, my child. It was pity that was stirred in you last night. And at half past two it expressed itself in that bitter kiss.

ALEXANDRA. Bitter?

HYACINTH. It wasn't me you kissed, and yet I know it was bitter.

ALEXANDRA. I am very unhappy, Hyacinth. But when you talk to me like this . . . if you would only stay on a day or two longer and keep talking to me like this . . . then I should feel better.

HYACINTH. I'll stay, my child. I'll stay three days more to keep you cheerful; I'll stay four days—

AGI. Permit me to take my leave. [*Bows.*] Your highness.

[*Nervously takes leave of HYACINTH.*]

ALEXANDRA [*cannot bring herself to let him go like this*]. I admire your calm, your mastery of yourself. Yet I know you are only pretending. This isn't what you'd like to do.

[*She obstructs AGI's way.*]

AGI. Perhaps not, your highness.

ALEXANDRA. That isn't what you'd like to say.

AGI. Perhaps not.

ALEXANDRA. But . . . if you can control yourself so perfectly now, why didn't you last night? [*Angrily.*] That's what I want to know.

HYACINTH. I'll stay a week.

ALEXANDRA [*more and more hysterically*]. If you can be so calm now, why weren't you calm then? Why did you do what you did? Why? Why? What did you want?

AGI. I don't know. That is the strangest part of what happened last night. I didn't quite know what I wanted.

ALEXANDRA. You didn't know?

AGI. No.

ALEXANDRA. You didn't know, and yet—

HYACINTH. My child . . . be calm . . . I'll stay a fortnight.

ALEXANDRA [*with growing indignation, unheeding him*]. He didn't know what he wanted . . . yet he dragged me along with him . . . appealed to my sympathy . . . my credulity . . . dragged me and I clung to him . . . ready for anything . . . even my own destruction . . . even if the whole world crumbled to pieces . . . I would have clung to him . . . and . . . he . . . he— [ALBERT enters quietly. She sees him but continues as if he were not there.] He didn't know what he wanted . . . and didn't care what harm he did . . . as long as he could gratify a momentary impulse . . . he—

ALBERT [*with mild irony*]. Xara, you misjudge him. He is a free spirit. He is not like us.

ALEXANDRA [*unheeding him*]. He only wanted to destroy everything . . . to make a scandal . . . Yes, he *was* ill-mannered and ignorant—

ALBERT. You are unjust. He is an astronomer.

ALEXANDRA. And now *I* say his conduct was impertinent.

AGI. Your highness!

ALBERT. Don't answer her, Hans! I forbid it, Hans! And if you will permit me . . . Hans . . . I will kiss you, Hans.

[*Embraces him and kisses him on the cheek.*]

HYACINTH. Bravo! I leave tomorrow.

AGI [*good-humoredly*]. Thanks, your highness. You overwhelm me.

ALBERT. Do you mind?

AGI. Not this one.

ALBERT. Shall I kiss you again?

AGI. Thanks, your highness, that would be too much. One was just enough.

[*GEORG and ARSEN enter at back. Each carries a bouquet of flowers in his hand. They pause a moment on the threshold, then come down to center, where they stand embarrassed. ALBERT goes down left.*]

GEORG. Professor—

[*He is too touched to speak; gives AGI the flowers. So does ARSEN.*]

AGI. For me?

[*Takes them.*]

GEORG. Yes.

[*Turns away; wipes the tears from his eyes. ARSEN hides his face against GEORG's shoulder.*]

AGI. There, now! Can these be—the Indians? The celebrated Indians? [GEORG and ARSEN turn and embrace him affectionately.] We must have a happy leave-taking. Not like this. Why, you ought to be delighted. From now on—no more history lessons. Now comes history itself.

[*He bows, and exits at back with the boys. There is a pause.*]

ALBERT. Don't be angry, Xara. I owed him that.

ALEXANDRA. Him?

ALBERT. In consolation for that kiss you gave him yesterday.

[ALEXANDRA *looks suspiciously at* HYACINTH.]

HYACINTH. Yes . . . yes. It is true.

ALEXANDRA. Well, then . . . I was not to blame?

HYACINTH. No, my child.

ALEXANDRA. And I didn't make an irreparable blunder?

HYACINTH. That is almost impossible for one in your social position.

ALEXANDRA [*mournfully*]. And I wasn't a heroine?

HYACINTH. No, my child.

ALEXANDRA. What was I then?

HYACINTH. Don't ask, my child.

[*There is a brief pause.*]

ALBERT [*with ceremonious elegance*]. Alexandra . . . last night you made handsome amends for a blunder of mine. I ask you now to stay at my side through life. And when I am at fault be always as . . . as . . . courageous as you were then. Will you?

[*Extends his hand to her.*]

ALEXANDRA [*gives him her hand. There is a brief silence*]. Albert . . . it is my duty to be quite candid. If I tell you honestly that at this moment I feel no other sentiment toward you than respect . . . and friendship—

ALBERT. Then I answer you, Xara, that it suffices me now.

ALEXANDRA [*wistfully but kindly*]. We haven't contrived a love match, have we?

ALBERT. No. No. Decidedly not.

[*With each "no" he shakes her hand.*]

ALEXANDRA. No.

HYACINTH. No.

ALBERT. May I say what we have contrived instead?

ALEXANDRA. Yes.

ALBERT. We have contrived . . . something more beautiful. . . . Love that comes after marriage. The deeper and stronger happiness that . . . that—

HYACINTH. That comes later and endures longer.

ALBERT. Extraordinary that you always express one's innermost thoughts so neatly. Think of this: Katherine of Württemberg was the happiest wife in the world. And yet hers was one of those compulsory marriages which Napoleon— [*Looks around.*] Napole . . . but happy, you see, nevertheless.

ALEXANDRA [*sighs*]. Nevertheless.

[*There is a pause. DOMINICA enters.*]

DOMINICA. My dear Alexandra.

[*Embraces her.*]

ALEXANDRA. Welcome, Aunt Dominica.

[*Kisses her hand with profound reverence.*]

DOMINICA. Tell me, my dears, hasn't the professor come yet?

HYACINTH. Oh, yes; he was here.

DOMINICA. Well?

HYACINTH. And he has gone away.

[*A long silence.*]

DOMINICA. What does this silence mean? Why don't you speak?

[*Another silence during which*

BEATRICE *enters.*]

BEATRICE [*regards the silent group; terror seizes her; she cries out*]. Merciful heaven! Has something happened again?

HYACINTH. The professor was kissed.

BEATRICE [*in alarm*]. By whom?

HYACINTH. By Albert.

BEATRICE [*with a sigh of relief*]. Oh!

DOMINICA. What does this mean? One after another, you are all kissing this person. What sort of man is he?

HYACINTH. A most admirable man.

BEATRICE. Did you kiss him, too?

HYACINTH. Yesterday. But I shall kiss him again before he goes away.

DOMINICA. There appears to be no further need for me to talk to him; the young man has had his reward.

ALBERT. It seems to me, mother, that a man who performed such a great service for the family deserved it. Not only from the bride but also from the bridegroom.

[DOMINICA *nods assent*.]

HYACINTH. Especially from the bridegroom.

DOMINICA. Quite right.

BEATRICE. If he hasn't gone yet . . . perhaps I ought to kiss him, too . . . what?

DOMINICA. I fancy he has had enough. But I shall kiss . . . your daughter.

ALEXANDRA. Dear Aunt . . . if you deem me worthy. . . .

DOMINICA. Entirely, my dear daughter, with only this suggestion: That you remember now and again that your sainted father used to call you his swan. Think often of what it means to be a swan . . . gliding proudly . . . majestically . . . where the moon gleams on the mirror of the water . . . gliding always in that purple radiance . . . and never coming ashore. For when a swan walks, my daughter . . . when she waddles up the bank . . . then she painfully resembles another bird.

ALEXANDRA [*softly ironical at her own expense*]. A goose?

DOMINICA. Almost, my girl. Natural history teaches that the swan is nothing but an aristocratic duck. That is why she must stay on the mirror of the water. She is a bird, but she may never fly. She knows a song, but she may never sing until she is about to die. Yes, dear, glide on the water . . . head high . . . stately silence . . . and the song—never!

[*There is a pause.*]

CÆSAR [*entering at right*]. Breakfast is served.

[HYACINTH *proffers* DOMINICA *his arm*. Next goes BEATRICE *alone*. Then ALBERT and ALEXANDRA, *arm in arm*. They *exit*. CÆSAR *strides majestically after them as*]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

A PROLOGUE TO "KING LEAR"

Translated by
LOUIS RITTENBERG

Not yet produced in America

CHARACTERS

BÁNÁTI, *an actor*
DR. ERNÖ
DR. KISS
HELEN
DUKE OF BURGUNDY
SOMOGYI
FIREMAN
PROPERTY MAN
STAGE MANAGER
WIG-MAKER
PORTER

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

Stage hands, firemen, and voices in the dark.

The action takes place upon the stage, just before a performance of Shakespeare's "King Lear."

[SCENE: *A room of state in King Lear's palace. A throne stands upon a platform in the center. At the rise of curtain the stage is dimly lit. Several stage hands are in the act of carrying the last wing and, having placed it where it belongs, they exit. Three other stage hands are busy about the throne. In the center of the stage, with his back to the audience, stands the PROPERTY MAN watching the stage hands. Nearby stands an OLD FIREMAN. For a while*

no one speaks; only the hammering of stage hands is heard.]

PROPERTY MAN. Back drop! [*Back scene descends.*] Now the front. Let 'er go! [*His orders are carried out.*] Good. Lights! [*It grows lighter on the stage.*] Ramaszéder! [*No response.*] Ramaszéder!! [*Silence.*] Ramaszéder!!!

A VOICE. Here I am.

PROPERTY MAN [*to stage hand*]. Get in there.

[*Stage hand sits down on throne.*]

PROPERTY MAN. Ramaszéder.

A VOICE. Yes!

PROPERTY MAN. Try the spotlight! Throw it on the throne!

[*From above, a shaft of light from the spotlight shifts about until it finds the throne.*]

PROPERTY MAN. Higher! Lower! [*The light recedes from throne.*] Where are you taking it? [*The light is entirely removed.*] Ramaszéder!! [*The light returns to the throne and shines on stage hand's head.*] That's just right.

[*The light is extinguished, stage hand gets off throne and exits together with others. An old scrub-woman enters with broom and sweeps all around the throne. PROPERTY MAN exits. Presently, four firemen enter at right and march, in military fashion, across the stage. They halt in front of the OLD FIREMAN at left.*]

FIRST FIREMAN [*salutes*]. I beg to report, sir, there's nothing new. Everything is shipshape.

[*OLD FIREMAN mutely salutes and walks off. The four firemen march out. The old man, all alone, slowly paces to and fro. Scrub-woman exits.*]

BÁNÁTI [*rushes in at left. He is excited, as though pursued. He wears topcoat with upturned collar, and also a hat. He halts in the center of the stage, listens, then dashes on and disappears at right. Meanwhile he is greeted by FIREMAN: "Good evening sir." Which he returns by.*].—"Good evening."

[*Slight pause. Fireman continues to pace.*]

BÁNÁTI'S VOICE [*behind the scenes, bellowing*]. Somogyi! [*Slight pause. Still bellowing behind the scenes.*] Somogyi!! [*Silence.*] Somogyi!!! [*Slight pause. Rushes in at right, in shirt sleeves, minus jacket, vest and hat.*] Somogyi!!!

FIREMAN. I'll go and find him at once. [*Hurries off at left; outside he bellows.*] Somogyi!

[*SOMOGYI, the costumer, appears at right.*]

BÁNÁTI. Where have you been sneaking about? Why aren't you here? Where are you? Why don't you come when you're called?

SOMOGYI. I am here, sir. I am coming, sir.

BÁNÁTI. Is Mr. Almády here already?

SOMOGYI. He is, sir.

BÁNÁTI. Is he made up?

SOMOGYI. I think so.

BÁNÁTI. Well, then, run like a madman and ask him to come here immediately.

SOMOGYI. I beg pardon, Mr. Bánáti, but the reason I wasn't here is because you've never been here so early. It's only six o'clock, sir, and the performance doesn't go on until . . .

BÁNÁTI. Stop your babbling. Run along and fetch Mr. Almády . . . or never mind. Don't leave me here alone. Stick close to me. Don't dare to budge away all evening.

SOMOGYI. But Mr. Bánáti . . .

BÁNÁTI. Wait. . . Send some one for Mr. Almády, and be quick about it. Well, what are you standing for? What are you gaping at? [*SOMOGYI stirs to go.*] Don't you go away. Send somebody. [*Roars.*] Ramaszéder!!

SOMOGYI. Ramaszéder!!

A VOICE OUTSIDE [*howling*].
Ramaszéder!!

[*Absolute silence.*]

SOMOGYI. Ramaszéder!!!!!!

VOICE OF RAMASZÉDER [*from above, at right*]. Here I am!

SOMOGYI [*in the direction of the voice*]. Hurry and . . .

BÁNÁTI [*in the direction of the voice*]. Rush like a madman and tell Mr. Almády that I wish he'd come here at once. It's very urgent

SOMOGYI. Say there's trouble.

THE VOICE. Yes, sir.

BÁNÁTI. How do you know there's trouble?

SOMOGYI. I can see that, Mr. Bánáti. Is it serious trouble?

BÁNÁTI. And how serious! Now, get out. Go to my dressing-room and see whether there is a stranger there.

SOMOGYI. And if there is?

BÁNÁTI. Go, get, begone, come here, skip! What are you standing here for?

[*SOMOGYI dashes out at right.*]

BÁNÁTI [*anxiously follows him with his eyes, then calls out*]. Nobody?

SOMOGYI [*outside*]. Not a soul.

BÁNÁTI. Not even in the corridor?

SOMOGYI [*outside*]. No.

[*Reënters.*]

BÁNÁTI. Can you lock the little door that leads from the stairs to the corridor?

SOMOGYI. Yes.

BÁNÁTI. Have it done at once. [*SOMOGYI dashes out.*] And tell the woman who sits there that I'm not here for anybody.

SOMOGYI [*returns after a slight pause*]. But, Mr. Bánáti, what's happened?

BÁNÁTI. I don't dare remain in my dressing-room. . . . [*Agitated, looks about furtively.*] I ought to dress in some other place. . . . There is a man after me, Somogyi. They're pursuing me with a gun. There are two of them.

SOMOGYI. Autograph hunters?

BÁNÁTI. Not at all. It's a husband, Somogyi. A husband who is jealous of his wife.

SOMOGYI. Whew!

BÁNÁTI. Yes, son, I've been caught in the act. . . . [*The DUKE OF BURGUNDY, in full make-up, enters. BÁNÁTI, turning to him, proceeds.*] . . . caught in the act. Almády . . . caught and they're at my heels. . . . I jumped through the kitchen window out onto the terrace, but they saw me and ran right after me. . . . I raced them down the stairs. They were right behind me . . . then out into the street . . . through two streets, with them behind me. . . . Then out to the Square. There I jumped into a cab and told the fellow to step on the gas. And now here I am. And all this just before the premier of "King Lear," my finest rôle . . . before "Lear." . . . Why, they even ran after the cab. They're apt to be here any minute.

BURGUNDY. Who?

BÁNÁTI. What do you mean who?

BURGUNDY. Who ran?

BÁNÁTI. Her husband and a friend of his.

BURGUNDY. Whose husband?

BÁNÁTI. The woman's husband. They're sure to be here in another minute.

BURGUNDY. But who is this woman?

BÁNÁTI. You must be crazy. You

don't expect me to betray a woman's name, do you?

BURGUNDY. But if her husband is to be here so soon . . .

[*A bell rings.*]

BÁNÁTI [*aghast*]. They're ringing.

SOMOGYI. It's only the stage manager.

[*WIG-MAKER enters at left, bringing a gray beard and a long-haired periwig.*]

WIG-MAKER. I kiss your feet, Mr. Bánáti. [*Ambles to right.*] Here are the hairy paraphernalia, sir.

BURGUNDY. I say, Sommer, you're just the man I want to see. Now, listen. If you give me another beard smelling like the one I had yesterday, I'll kick you out of here, beard and all.

BÁNÁTI. I've told him the same thing. And here I have to play Lear in this wretched frame of mind . . . in a beard that smells of glue. . . . Let's see it. [*Smells the beard.*] What the devil did you do with this?

WIG-MAKER. Just a bit of Eau de Cologne, sir.

BÁNÁTI. Have you gone out of your head? Why, this is awful.

WIG-MAKER. Kings are supposed to wear scented beards. Every child knows that. Come now, Mr. Bánáti, I have no time to dilly-dally.

[*Moves toward right.*]

BURGUNDY [*to Bánáti*]. And what do you want me for?

BÁNÁTI. Please stay here with me . . . they are sure to break in here.

SOMOGYI. I've ordered the door locked.

BURGUNDY. Just tell the porter.

BÁNÁTI. You can never tell . . . he may break his way in despite the

porter . . . why, he may even rush out on the stage just in the midst of my playing . . .

BURGUNDY. But who the devil is this wild animal?

BÁNÁTI. I don't know him . . . never saw him in all my life. . . . The woman I met in the zoo . . . just a passing acquaintance. . . . I had a glimpse of the husband while jumping through the kitchen window. But the way that man roared as he dashed after me, and even after my cab. . . . If he ever gets in here . . . good night. And there are two of them. He and some friend of his.

WIG-MAKER [*coldly*]. Come, come, Mr. Bánáti, let's get through with this hair.

BÁNÁTI. Oh, all right. I beg of you, Almády, not to leave me. And you, Somogyi, go take another peep into my dressing-room to see if they're not there yet. [*SOMOGYI runs out at right.*] This is dreadful. What'll I do if they stir up a scandal here?

BURGUNDY. Why, we'll throw them out.

BÁNÁTI. That won't help me much. This is a serious matter, not saying a thing about the shooting he'll do while we may try to throw him out. Or the shooting that they may do.

BURGUNDY. How many of them are there?

BÁNÁTI. When they started out, there were only two. But who can tell how many more have joined them since then?

BURGUNDY. Is he a strong man?

BÁNÁTI. Rather thin, I should say, judging from the short glimpse

I had of him. But he is furious! And wears glasses!

BURGUNDY. Your first job is to knock off his glasses, so as to prevent him from aiming well.

BÁNÁTI [*panic-stricken*]. Are you so sure that he'll shoot?

BURGUNDY. Yes, if he is as enraged as you say he is.

WIG-MAKER. Let's get on with the hair. I haven't any time to waste.

BÁNÁTI [*bellows out*]. Somogyi!

SOMOgyi [*enters at right*]. The coast is clear! You may come right ahead. I tipped off the porter, too. Nobody can possibly get in here.

[*They exit at right, with SOMOgyi leading, followed by BURGUNDY and the WIG-MAKER. Pause.*

FIREMAN *walks up and down the stage and, after a while, steps forward, reciting.*]

Oh, wondrous world! This throne and royal splendor,

Which loyally I guard against the flames,

Whilst I move passively along my beat,

And this poor player here, shouting like mad,

As one pursued, comes fleeing hither in haste!

Wondrous world! Most wondrous and disgusting!

I've spent two decades with this motley crew

And wisely noted how they laugh and weep,

And how they strut and pose, bluster and brag,

Exalted to the skies by storms of plaudits.

And here am I—a man of simple virtue,

Of grave decorum as becomes a fireman,

Watching them day by day for twenty years

Or more, despising them as others do, Their fake emotions and their saltless tears,

Their counterfeiting rage and tenderness,

Which I despise most heartily and deeply.

Yet I keep silent as I move among them,

While pacing to and fro, year in, year out,

Disgust doth choke my heart, and on my lips

A smile of sage contempt and bitter scorn.

No more of this. I hear a noise from yonder,

Maddened with rage, the hunter rushes hither;

I feel the breath of scandal and rejoice.

Be still, my lips. Let us await the outcome.

[FIREMAN *withdraws to the rear*. DR. ERNÖ and DR. KISS *rush in at left*. Right behind them is the PORTER who *quickly gets in front of them to stop their progress.*]

PORTER. I warn you, gentlemen, if you don't leave, I'll call a policeman.

ERNÖ. Do. Call the police captain for all I care.

KISS [*to ERNÖ*]. But, for heaven's sake, don't lose your sanity.

ERNÖ. I lost that a long time ago. [*Steps close to the PORTER menacingly.*] Out of my way, or fetch that scoundrel.

PORTER. You can't insult our artists. I want you to know that you are on the stage of a State Theatre. Now, get out of here.

ERNÖ. I'll do nothing of the kind until I've settled with that scoundrel. I hereby suspend the traditions of this art institute. At present this is nothing more than a field of honor.

KISS. But, Géza, I implore you to come away. We'll talk things over out in the street.

ERNÖ. Leave me alone. [*To PORTER.*] Get out of my way or I'll knock you down.

PORTER [*clutches* DR. ERNÖ *and says to FIREMAN*]. Please help me, Mr. Hose-carrier.

FIREMAN. I am no hose-carrier.

PORTER [*while tussling with ERNÖ*]. A lot I care . . . Mr. Fire Chief . . . but help me . . . this man is a lunatic.

FIREMAN. I am no Fire Chief. You'll have to learn how to address me properly.

KISS [*intervenes*]. But, Géza, that'll do now.

[*He, too, becomes involved in the scrimmage.*]

PORTER. Mr. Fireman!

FIREMAN. I am Sergeant!

PORTER. Mr. Sergeant!

FIREMAN. At last! That's the way to talk.

PORTER. Sergeant . . . help me take this lunatic out of here.

FIREMAN. I can't do that. It's not my job. [*Calmly walks on.*] I merely wanted to make you give me the respect that's due me.

ERNÖ [*frees himself from his assailant*]. I will not leave.

KISS. But please . . . let me say just one word. . . .

ERNÖ [*points to PORTER*]. Not while that man is around.

KISS [*to PORTER*]. Suppose you let him alone a while. He'll be himself again in no time. Just leave him to

me. Nothing will happen to him, I assure you. We'll leave as soon as he has cooled off.

PORTER. I'm going to fetch an officer.

ERNÖ. You may as well because all the guaranties my friend here offers you are quite worthless. I'm going to slap the face of that contemptible fellow, that miserable actor! I'll give him a beating! I'll insult him! Nothing can stop me. I'll beat him just so long as there is a breath of life in him. He'll be half dead, I tell you!

[*STAGE MANAGER hurries in at left.*]

STAGE MANAGER. What's all this rumpus? Who are these people?

PORTER. This man here, sir, is a lunatic.

STAGE MANAGER. How dared you let him get in here?

PORTER. He slammed me against the stairs twice. I am no match for him. You better stay here while I get a policeman.

STAGE MANAGER. That isn't necessary at all. We can bounce him out without a policeman. [*To ERNÖ.*] Please leave the place.

ERNÖ. I will not.

STAGE MANAGER. Please get off the stage.

ERNÖ. No. I want to beat the life out of Bánáti, the actor, because he has upset my domestic happiness.

STAGE MANAGER. You want to beat him up, here?

ERNÖ. Wherever I lay my hands on him.

STAGE MANAGER. You'd better get out of here now, or I'll rip your ear off.

KISS. Géza, I'm going to leave you here.

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC

ERNÖ. That was to be expected. Why, you're my friend, so it is quite natural.

STAGE MANAGER [*bellows*]. Get to hell out!

[DUKE OF BURGUNDY *enters. He speaks in the affected royal tone of classical actors.*]

STAGE MANAGER. Mr. Almády, this stranger here is out to kick up a row. He insists on seeing Mr. Bánáti and threatens to beat him to death.

BURGUNDY. We shall be there, good stranger.

ERNÖ. Are you an actor?

BURGUNDY. Verily.

ERNÖ. I am Dr. Géza Ernö, professor.

BURGUNDY. Almády is my name.

ERNÖ. Pardon me, but I presume you to be a gentleman. Therefore I call on you to lead me to Kálmán Bánáti, the actor, who has despoiled my domestic felicity. And for that I want to punish him now.

BURGUNDY. Sir, this is the stage of our supreme state institution of art. The performance is about to begin and Master Bánáti plays the chief rôle. If you have any demands to make upon him, please do so after the performance. Our social customs provide a number of forms in which to dispose of such painful incidents. But the means you have chosen are not among those. Good day, sir. [*To STAGE MANAGER.*] Remove him!

[*Exits at right.*]

ERNÖ. Just the same, I'll settle with him, if it's the last thing I do.

[*Dashes out at right.*]

KISS. Good God, Géza!

[*Dashes out at right, after ERNÖ.*]

STAGE MANAGER [*to PORTER*]. Run

for a policeman, and I'll go to see that nothing terrible happens!

[STAGE MANAGER *rushes off at left, PORTER at right. FIREMAN steps forward.*]

FIREMAN [*declaiming*]:

Scandal's a-brewing. What exquisite joy!

Upon my faith, in but a few minutes more

What cuffs and blows will come resounding forth:

'Tis meet, indeed. For jealousy ariseth

From whims of passion and most savage lusts.

How great a recompense it is to me, That am a loyal husband and a father,

To see and mark the sorry spectacle Of jealousy and vile seduction.

What agony! "Poor and content is rich

And rich enough. And wealth is but a torment

To him who ever fears he shall be poor."

What though my wife be old and ugly, too,

Shriveled and worn, with eyes that cross each other,

So that my heart's at ease at thought of her;

E'en as a bird secure within its nest. For her I've naught to fear, and as

for me,

Long past the age of levity am I; A goodly steak and half a quart of wine,

A pipe to boot—are all that I desire. No longer do I crave the love of woman,

Perchance 'tis why a grim, perverted joy

Doth grip me at sight of others' woes. It may be quite unseemly, yet I vow

I look with joy upon the mad encounter

'Twixt craven lover and jealous husband.

[*With a smile of glee, FIREMAN struts to the rear. Noise back-stage.*]

BURGUNDY [*enters stealthily at left back*]. Come this way and keep quiet.

BÁNÁTI [*follows BURGUNDY in. He is attired in King Lear's costume, his face properly made up, but there is no wig on his head, nor beard on his face. Behind him comes the WIG-MAKER followed by SOMOGYI carrying the royal crown*]. This is dreadful! They let that lunatic get in here . . . and I have to . . . but where on earth are the police?

BURGUNDY. They've gone to call them.

SOMOGYI. Don't be afraid, sir. We're with you.

WIG-MAKER. Come on with the hair. Really, Mr. Bánáti, I have no time.

[*In the course of what follows he adjusts wig and beard on BÁNÁTI.*]

BÁNÁTI. If only all this could have happened half an hour later, so that the performance would have been on. In that case the stage could have offered some refuge. . . . And, damn it, I can't remember a line. . . . God, what predicaments I get into! Just you stay here, Almády . . . so that there will be no scandal.

BURGUNDY. That's upon us already, son.

BÁNÁTI. Do you think it'll get into the papers?

BURGUNDY. That all depends on what it develops into.

BÁNÁTI [*to WIG-MAKER*]. Come, come. [*To BURGUNDY.*] Where are they now?

BURGUNDY. The stage manager has locked the dressing-room door on them.

SOMOGYI. Please sit down. The coronation is about to start.

[BÁNÁTI *sits down*; WIG-MAKER and SOMOGYI *place the crown on his head*.]

BÁNÁTI [*sits on the step leading to the throne*]. What'll we do if they follow us in here?

BURGUNDY. The police ought to be here by then. And in that case, you see, it will get into the papers.

BÁNÁTI. Do you think enough policemen will come? How many did they send for? Somogyi, run to make sure that they get enough of them. . . . But, no. Wait. No matter what I say or where I send you, you just stay near me.

WIG-MAKER. I'll tell them on my way out.

[*Exits. FIREMAN ambles after him.*]

BÁNÁTI [*rises to his full height*]. What a ghastly mess.

[*Noise from without.*]

STAGE MANAGER [*runs in at right*]. Somebody run over to the producer. Tell him the door has been broken in. I'll go and find the director.

[*Dashes off at left.*]

BÁNÁTI [*in a stentorian voice*]. Don't go! Stay with me! All of you stay with me! My sword! My sword!

[SOMOGYI *runs out at left*.

ERNÖ and KISS *enter at right*.]

ERNÖ [*suddenly stops and looks at BÁNÁTI*]. Are you Kálmán Bánáti?

LEAR. The same.

[ERNÖ *adjusts his pince-nez*.

Pause. They gaze at one another. LEAR slowly moves ahead, with stately bearing ascending the first step of the throne; there he halts majestically.]

BURGUNDY [*steps up to ERNÖ*]. Beg pardon, professor, but I am delighted to see you somewhat calmer. Kindly accompany me to the reception room where we may discuss this matter as befits men of culture.

ERNÖ. I have nothing to discuss with you. Thanks, but really there is nothing. I have something to say to Mr. Bánáti but, frankly, I am not certain at the moment whether it is really he.

[*Points toward LEAR.*]

BURGUNDY. Don't be unreasonable, but follow me to the reception room.

KISS. Yes, come let's go to the reception room.

ERNÖ [*disconcerted*]. I repeat—I don't know whether it is the actor Bánáti whose commanding figure stands on the steps over there. If I am not mistaken, he is in the costume of some classic play, with a crown on his head. Perhaps he impersonates our first apostolic ruler, King Stephen.

BURGUNDY. No, sir, he is King Lear.

ERNÖ [*touches his pince-nez*]. King Lear?

BURGUNDY. Yes, Lear, the unhappy king. That is the play we have on program this evening. It is a drama by Editor-in-chief Shakespeare.

ERNÖ. Thank you, sir. That I know well. So you are the King of France?

BURGUNDY. Nay, sir. I am the Duke of Burgundy.

ERNÖ. I know. The one who also wanted to marry one of the Lear daughters.

BURGUNDY. But he changed his mind, sir.

ERNÖ. I know. For two years now I have had the pleasure of giving a course in Shakespeare at the University.

BURGUNDY. You are on the faculty?

ERNÖ. I daresay. [*To LEAR.*] I am Dr. Géza Ernő, university professor and an honorary member on the Shakespeare Committee of the Kisfaludy Society.

LEAR [*in an affected royal tone*]. I greet thee!

[*SOMOGYI enters, bringing a huge broadsword. Hands the sword to BURGUNDY who happens to be nearest to him.*]

BURGUNDY [*to SOMOGYI in an affected tone*]. Begone!

[*SOMOGYI exits.*]

BURGUNDY [*deferentially extends sword to LEAR*]. Your sword, sir.

LEAR. I thank thee.

KISS. Come on, Géza, this is neither the time nor the place.

ERNÖ. I will not leave.

LEAR. What do you wish of me?

ERNÖ. That is simple enough. My friend and colleague here, Dr. Ervin Kiss . . .

KISS. I am Dr. Kiss.

LEAR. I greet thee!

[*BURGUNDY bows.*]

ERNÖ. Dr. Kiss lives in the same house where I do. Indeed, on the same floor. Having for years made futile attempts to seduce my wife . . .

KISS [*dumbfounded*]. What's this?

I resent your insinuation. Once and for all times I . . .

LEAR. Silence, good stranger.

BURGUNDY. Silence.

ERNÖ. Whenever I was not at home, he used to call on Helen and read to her the poems of Robert Burns. Then he introduced her to his own translation of Byron's "Don Juan" which is, of course, far inferior to the one rendered by Abrányi. But that is beside the point.

KISS. Indeed.

LEAR. Peace, good stranger! Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

ERNÖ. That is from the first act of "King Lear" and, properly quoted, reads—"Peace, Kent! Come not between the dragon and his wrath." But that, too, is beside the point. With such recitations and the amorous sentiments of other people did he attempt to induce Helen to visit him at Number 4 Szigony Street, where, taking success for granted, he had rented extra-marital bachelor quarters.

KISS. So that's the way the wind blows?

ERNÖ. Yes, Ervin. This is a day of reckoning. I shall kill two birds with one stone to-day.

BURGUNDY. A while ago you spoke much less fastidiously.

ERNÖ. That has its simple reason. A while ago I was terrifically excited. But now I am as cool and desperate as a Toledo blade.

[STAGE MANAGER *enters*.]

STAGE MANAGER. I can't find a policeman anywhere.

ERNÖ. You needn't bother. As you see, we are quite calm in our negotiations.

LEAR. Nevertheless, I'd prefer to have you stay nearby.

[STAGE MANAGER *bows and departs*.]

ERNÖ. The woman repulsed these juvenile and likewise professorial attempts. In fact, she kept me posted daily about the siege of my good friend. Being repelled, he waited for the hour of revenge to strike.

[KISS *laughs aloud*.]

ERNÖ. That does not disturb me. Last week he asked me into his home to inform me that Helen has been strolling in the zoo with an actor-like gentleman—always in front of the same cage. At first I assumed it to be mere slander. I accepted the information but did not say a word. Then he called me again to say that the cage held a puma and that the man is the actor Bánáti, the famous Bánáti. [LEAR *graciously smiles in acknowledgment*.] But still I did not call Helen to account. Finally, last night he informed me that what had been mere suspicion in his mind had turned to certainty. He said that the actor Bánáti visits Helen afternoons while I am away at the university. I refused to believe it. So he dared me to lie in ambush in his kitchen this afternoon. I did so. And, much to my astonishment, his denunciation proved to be well-founded. A man who looked like an actor entered my home. After some hesitation, in the course of which I was chicken-hearted enough to accept his aid, I rang the bell of my apartment. The maid was flustered and I pushed her aside. Then I heard the slamming of doors and a suppressed scream. I rushed into the room but the man was no longer there—only my wife. I dashed out of the room just in time to see a smooth-shaven fellow

jump through the kitchen window. I pursued him, and here I am.

KISS. That is the difference between us. I am not here.

[*Exits in haste.*]

ERNÖ. Evidently, I have disposed of him. Now I would like an answer from you, whose identity is still unknown to me. Was it you who jumped through my kitchen window?

LEAR. Certainly I am not the person who approached your wife with even a shadow of indecent intent.

ERNÖ. Did you jump through the window?

LEAR. I am the father of four children, sir.

BURGUNDY. He . . . through the window? Look upon him! Upon his revered gray head!

ERNÖ. Was it not you who strolled with her in the zoölogical gardens? I caution you that she told me your name. Be good enough to enlighten me . . . if I may use the vernacular—what do you look like? Are you old? Young? Handsome? Ugly? It is dreadful to be face to face with my wife's seducer and not to know how he looks. Are you old?

LEAR. That is of no consequence.

ERNÖ. It is, indeed. You and I are now worlds apart. I do not know to whom I am speaking and that restrains me from saying what is on my mind. It is as if I were conversing over the telephone with you. What is your face like? Is it bold? Have you eagle eyes? If I knew, I would meet your gaze unflinchingly. Or is it a craven, unobtrusive face? In that case, I would look upon you with contempt. Is it a mellow, honest face? That might make me believe the things you tell me. Or

is it a defiant, sardonic face? That would provoke me and I might strike you.

BURGUNDY. Take care, good sir.

ERNÖ. I spoke only hypothetically. I am trying to analyze this unique situation into which I, a civilized being, have been swept. My wife's seducer hides from me behind a mask and stands before me in the guise of a majestic figure, an unhappy mythical king and father, whose fate has so often stirred me. And above it all, over and above my comparatively speck-like grief, hovers the tremendous Shakespearean sorrow that verges on madness. Over the both of us the spirit of that giant British poet holds relentless sway. It is Shakespeare of whom Taine said that he was overshadowing and creative, unfathomable, overbearing, immoral and extraordinary—the greatest figure that has ever revealed the whole gamut of form and has conjured living characters into our ken.

[*Points at LEAR.*]

BURGUNDY. I consider Shakespeare an ordinary drunken actor and theatrical director. His plays were written by Bacon.

ERNÖ [*with a deprecatory gesture*]. Superficial talk. I have read Homes, Appleton, Morgan, Pott, Donnelly, Wigston, Bormann, Schipper and Wulker. All these have delved into the Baconian theory, which does not affect me in the least. Indeed, it is not really a question of whether it was Shakespeare or Bacon. The important thing is the brain which tradition calls Shakespeare: it is the poetic masterpiece that matters. [*Points to LEAR.*] Lear is important. Yes, this very figure which has suf-

ferred and moved us for three hundred years. And so to me the question resolves itself in two—there are internal and external obstacles. Physical and psychic. Let us begin with the external, or physical, handicaps. I have come here with the thought of corporal punishment. [LEAR starts.] I was determined to employ every known means of physical punishment. [LEAR starts again.] But right here I encounter physical obstacles. You may assume that I should be happy to slap his face. . . .

BURGUNDY. Sir!

[LEAR covers his face with his hair.]

LEAR. Ah! . . .

[Ascends a step higher.]

ERNÖ. In fact, I want to slap his face. Remember, I had hoped to obtain satisfaction, or what the Germans call *Entspannung*, just in that way. But I do not know whether I shall slap his face. Certainly, I do not know at this moment, though all indications tend to the belief that I shall not. Why? In the first place his face is so full of hair that there is no room for a slap. You must admit that, aside from all other considerations, we must bear in mind sheer physical obstacles. A slap calls for smacking space. "A blow cannot be measured," said Benvenuto Cellini, noted goldsmith and swashbuckler. And he was right. You cannot aim and hope to strike that tiny area which happens to be hairless. It robs you of all zest. A slap requires convenience, elbow room or *Spielraum*, as the Germans might say, which is totally lacking in this case because of the density of hair. And it is rather proper that it is lacking. Lear, after all, is not a historical figure.

He is a legendary king, a fictitious ruler. I think it quite splendid that the graphic artist has employed the exaggeration of hair to indicate that we are face to face with the aged monarch of fable. In this manner, the savage intensity of tragedy, of anguish, becomes more mythical, more general and, therefore, more acute. I cannot knock him on the head partly because I would hurt my hand on the jagged corners and partly because I own no heavier weapon with which, in the words of Toldi, "to bash his golden crown into his brains." That would leave the possibility of kicking. [To BURGUNDY.] Tell me . . . [BURGUNDY makes gesture of remonstrance.] . . . and this question is merely a matter of form . . . tell me, where shall I kick him? One cannot kick into such an ample garment. The foot simply wavers, for the foot must have a target. Modern clothes outline everything. In the case of a frock-coat, if I place a kick under the two rear buttons, I am bound to hit the desired spot every time. And the same is true of all other present-day cloaks. But a robe such as he is wearing neutralizes the force of any kick; it gets lost in the folds. Or I might aim too low, precisely where it is dead space, *Toter Raum*, as the Germans say. So, that, too, is hopeless. A final alternative might be the pulling of his beard, but, then, that is not his own. Therefore, you can easily see how well protected he is by externalities, not speaking of his sword at all.

[Blare of trumpets. ERNÖ gives a start.]

LEAR. It is nothing. Just the musicians testing their trumpets.

ERNÖ. That was the first part of the problem—a summary of physical handicaps. Now comes the second part of my self-diagnosis—psychic handicaps.

[STAGE MANAGER, *accompanied by HELEN, enters.*]

STAGE MANAGER. I beg pardon, Mr. Bánáti, but this lady . . .

ERNÖ. Helen!

LEAR [*steps off the platform*]. Madame . . . you here?

HELEN [*to her husband*]. I have come to get you, to prevent you from creating a scandal. Why, you must be insane. This thing will ruin me, if the newspapers learn of it.

[*Sobs.*]

ERNÖ. Calm yourself. I shan't create a scandal. But you ought not to be here.

HELEN. Where am I? What is this place?

BURGUNDY. This, madame, is a stage—the stage of the National Theatre.

HELEN. And what are you doing here? Are you going to play?

ERNÖ. I owe you no explanation. I am here to eradicate the stain that you have brought upon my name. Leave this place. You have nothing to look for here.

HELEN. But what are you looking for?

ERNÖ. I am having a reckoning with your seducer.

[*Points to LEAR.*]

HELEN. Who is that?

ERNÖ. Need you ask?

LEAR. Bánáti is my name, madame. [HELEN *laughs in derision*. LEAR *is vexed, but steps upon the platform with dignity.*] I really do not deserve this scornful laughter.

HELEN [*laughing*]. Is that you?

BURGUNDY. Lear, the unhappy king. Yes, madame, that is the drama we present this evening. And it is no laughing matter.

HELEN. Is that really you?

ERNÖ. This is no time for laughing. Behind that majestic exterior a blackguard is now offering apologies to an outraged husband.

BURGUNDY. Refrain from insulting him.

ERNÖ. Don't interfere with me. [*To LEAR.*] The misguided woman stammered a few words in her own defense while King Lear was hiding in the kitchen. Now is your opportunity to verify matters. She claims that you visited her only twice. Is that true?

HELEN. It is.

ERNÖ. I did not ask you. Let him reply.

LEAR. That is so. Only twice.

HELEN. I cannot believe it is you.

[*Laughs.*]

ERNÖ. Stop laughing, guilty woman.

HELEN. I am not guilty. And do not talk to me as if you were my judge.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

ERNÖ. I am your judge just so long as you are the accused.

LEAR. Madame, do not make me nervous. Let us settle this matter, for the performance must soon begin.

ERNÖ. Don't cry, but let's get through in a hurry. You said that there was nothing between you, except that he whispered jokes into your ears. This three-hundred-year-old man a royal teller . . . of so-called risqué stories.

LEAR. That is slander.

ERNÖ. He admits it. Do you?

HELEN [*crying*]. Yes.

LEAR. If it pleases her, so be it.

ERNÖ. What were those anecdotes? And how many?

HELEN. Two.

ERNÖ. Which was the first?

HELEN. Please don't torment me.

ERNÖ. Which was the first?

[*Advances toward HELEN.*]

BURGUNDY. Do not harm the woman.

LEAR. Your reckoning is with me. I am ready.

ERNÖ. Which was the first?

LEAR. The one about a citadel.

ERNÖ. I am familiar with it. It is vile humor, just the sort to offend my honor. But now, in the grip of this spectacle, I am unable to be furious. This saintly old man and *the citadel!* Why, it is incongruous! Don't say a word. Don't stir. Let me not be disillusioned. And what was the other anecdote?

LEAR [*haughtily*]. One called "Adolph and the Lamb."

ERNÖ. I am unfamiliar with it but the title is eloquent enough, my lord. Now I know a great deal, but still not everything. [*To HELEN.*] I see that you have become penitent under the weight of self-accusation. It is a grave moment and you must tell the truth. Answer me. Did this man touch you?

LEAR. Never!

ERNÖ. Did he touch you?

HELEN. Once . . . between telling the two anecdotes . . . I confess . . . he touched my ear.

ERNÖ. With his hand?

HELEN. No. With his lips.

ERNÖ. Did he kiss you?

HELEN. No. He merely touched it and I felt a chill run down my back. [*Sobs.*] I'll 'confess everything.

ERNÖ [*to LEAR*]. Sir, I declare that you breathed into my wife's ear so that it made her chilly.

LEAR. I?

ERNÖ. At this moment the scene before me is so far removed from such disgraceful playfulness that the process between thinking and slapping is completely suspended in my nervous system.

LEAR. I have four grown-up children!

ERNÖ. That does not affect me nearly as much as the crown, robe and beard, though I fear the spell will break; indeed, I feel it yielding already. Moreover, the presence of this guilty woman also embarrasses me. If I look at her . . .

[*With clenched fists he advances toward HELEN.*]

BURGUNDY [*steps between them protectingly*]. Take care, sir!

ERNÖ [*flustered, to LEAR*]. Quick, be seated on the throne, I tell you, because the spell is waning.

[*LEAR hastily sits on the throne.*]

BURGUNDY [*shouts*]. Ramaszéder! Spotlight!

A ray of light shines on LEAR's head. BURGUNDY leaps over to him and waves to those behind the scenes. Trumpet calls and thunder. LEAR stands majestically in the midst of light and thunder.

ERNÖ. That relieves me. Now I think I shall be able to control myself a little longer. We must lose no time. Let us be cold-blooded in summing up. Part one—strolls in the zoo. Am I right?

HELEN. Yes.

ERNÖ. Part two—visits to the home.

HELEN. Yes.

ERNÖ. Part three—the unexpected attack which has three subdivisions as follows: "The Citadel," "Adolph and the Lamb," and between the two is the moment when you took this lady's ear in your mouth.

LEAR. It's an exaggeration! What a brutal expression!

ERNÖ. In other words, that was all.

HELEN. Yes, all.

LEAR. Truly all.

ERNÖ. How remarkable. If you were to say so while wearing a plain cotton jacket and with your own hair on your head, I would not believe that it was all. Have you ever heard of Piero Torrigiani?

LEAR. No, sir, never.

ERNÖ. He was an Italian painter famous not for his pictures but because of the fact that he had slapped the face of Michelangelo. [*Shouts.*] Michelangelo!

LEAR. Fie!

ERNO. That's the way I feel about it, too. And yet . . . [*Advances menacingly, but is repulsed by LEAR's majestic gesture.*] Oh, how dreadful to be so restrained by culture. Terrible! [*Struggling with himself a while.*] Are you familiar with the name of Sir Thomas Lucy?

LEAR. I have never had the pleasure.

ERNÖ. Sir Thomas Lucy was the British nobleman who gave Shakespeare a beating. Think of it, sir! Shakespeare himself!

HELEN. Are you insane?

ERNÖ. This man here is merely King Lear—just hair, cosmetics, tin, mask and actor . . . but that was Shakespeare himself! As a historian, I thoroughly despise and brand Sir Thomas Lucy; but, as a man, I envy

at this moment his objectivity. [*With sudden determination.*] Plainly speaking, I cannot jump on your neck and hurl into your face some such words as "You lie! Miserable actor, vile seducer!"

BURGUNDY. Not so loud, good stranger. Look, how incensed he is. A plague upon you!

ERNÖ. Please refrain from using this recitative tone. You, too, are responsible for my bewilderment. I am like a bad self-lighter. I constantly press myself but cannot strike a flame.

LEAR. Leave him to me, good Burgundy.

ERNÖ. As for my wife, I shall have an accounting with her at home.

HELEN. I shall not be afraid!

ERNÖ [*to LEAR*]. But tell me where and when I may meet Bánáti the actor, the unscrupulous lady-killer. Then I shall deal with him. But you are not present now. If you are a man, meet me as a civilian.

LEAR. There is no need for that. The matter is so simple that it can be disposed of right here and now. [*Trumpets.* ERNÖ gives a start, while HELEN casts a frightened look in the direction of the sound.] Do not be nervous. It is only the musicians tuning their instruments. Burgundy, tell them it disturbs us. If they blow their trumpets again, I shall be compelled to take action. Speak to them curtly and with severity.

[*Trumpet sounds.*]

BURGUNDY [*calls behind the scenes*]. Bitte meine Herren, Ruhe!

[*Silence.*]

LEAR. Now, then, listen to me. And you, madame, interrupt me if

I should not be right. Also mark you that your contemptuous smile does not offend me because it is not intended for me, but for the situation into which I have drifted.

HELEN. I am not even smiling.

LEAR. I can feel it. You are loudly laughing within your heart. However, pay attention. Whenever I am particularly disgusted with human beings, I usually go to the zoo. Only he who lives among actors knows how much of what is comforting there is in the facial expression of a hyena, and how kindly is the look of a tiger. The zoo is my source of solace. It will continue to be my favorite strolling ground until I find one of my fellow-actors in a cage there. But let us not pursue that line. That is not the point.

ERNÖ. Really?

LEAR. Be seated, madame. [BURGUNDY offers HELEN a chair. She sits down.] I happened to be courting two of my usurers in front of the cage of the puma. I was giving candy to their children—Little Arpád and Little Morris. I did so in order to induce their fathers to extend my note for six hundred crowns, not to let them protest it. I see your scornful smile.

ERNÖ. Of course. Extension and protest sound terrible coming from under a royal crown. And a note for six hundred! Why, that's ridiculous.

LEAR. I know. But you asked me a while ago to let you meet Bánáti in person. And here is your answer—here and now. I have not time enough to disrobe and dress to your satisfaction. But I shall disengage Bánáti from this disguise with the same compelling artistry

with which I had concealed him. I want you and this noble lady to see that I am not afraid, that I do not hide behind this mask and the prestige of the great British poet. Notes . . . yes, notes, extension, protest, and six hundred crowns may be so ridiculous. And so I have handed you my royal crown.

ERNÖ. Well begun. Continue. You may succeed.

LEAR. I proceed. As I was giving candy to the children, in order to ingratiate myself with their papas, an attractive woman stopped in front of the puma's cage. But she did not look at the animal, she looked at me and smiled sweetly, as if to say: "Look at the great artist, what fun he finds in playing with children." Am I accurate?

HELEN. That is how it was.

LEAR. Our eyes met and she blushed slightly. Little Arpád's papa went off with Little Morris' papa, and so I introduced myself.

ERNÖ. Impertinence.

LEAR. Perhaps. [With a royal pose.] But I was overwhelmed by the charm, grace, modesty and the flush that came to the lovely face of the unknown lady.

ERNÖ. Again you speak the tongue of royalty. This will not do. I am beginning to recover.

BURGUNDY. And to be rude.

LEAR. Hence the royal tongue. For a moment, out of sheer self-defense, I took back the crown. But let us go on. The fair lady and I strolled about. We talked of the theatre, of society, and I asked her to permit me to call at her home.

ERNÖ. For what purpose?

LEAR. To make your acquaintance.

ERNÖ. Can one say to this ma-

jestic apparition that he is a brazen liar?

BURGUNDY. I do not advise it, good stranger.

LEAR. That is how I found myself in your domestic sanctuary. I admit to a streak of hard luck in those days. I lost enormously at the gaming table, too. At baccarat.

HELEN. How dreadful!

ERNÖ. Baccarat? How vile a word! Not at all becoming those legendary gray locks.

LEAR. That is why I say it. I had no luck at baccarat. Yes, I lost at baccarat . . . hard luck . . . baccarat, baccarat . . . and the stock exchange, for I lost there, too.

Helen. Frightful. Simply frightful.

ERNÖ [*stuffs his ears*]. Enough! Enough! This coarseness is horrible. It is murder, sir.

[*Laughs.*]

LEAR. No, sir, it is merely an act of undressing. You laugh and, lo, that removes my legendary gray wig. That was my purpose. It was my hard luck not to find you home. Always you came after I left.

ERNÖ. Once I returned in time and then you jumped through the kitchen window.

HELEN [*laughs*]. That's right . . .

LEAR. Don't excite me, madame.

HELEN. Looking at you now . . . and thinking of how you jumped through the kitchen window . . . why . . .

[*Smothers her mirth.*]

LEAR [*incensed*]. If it amuses you so much, I may also confess that I stepped into some dough.

HELEN [*laughs*]. I know.

LEAR [*furiously*]. And with that my legendary beard is off, too!

ERNÖ [*to HELEN*]. Stop laughing! [*To LEAR.*] Proceed.

LEAR. As to the most serious part of the indictment, that is, the two Orientally spiced stories, I admit really having related them to your wife.

ERNÖ. And what excuses have you to offer?

LEAR. In this city and age, I find nothing unusual about it. We happen to be living in Budapest. Here if a Shakespearean actor wishes to amuse a cultured lady, he invariably tells her short, erotic anecdotes of Oriental origin. Blame it on our peculiar type of culture. Have your quarrel with this decadent, hybrid social structure; but do not pick on certain individuals who are the victims of their age. Believe me, on my word of honor or even on my histrionic vanity, that I should have a thousand times more gladly recited Hamlet's great soliloquy, or the eulogy by Antonius, or even the frenzy of the distracted king under this crown. I should have preferred to recite Shakespeare instead of those anecdotes; but I wonder which would have amused her more? In the zoo, in keeping with the atmosphere, I recited for her one of La Fontaine's animal stories, in French. But it bored her.

ERNÖ. Is this true?

HELEN. It is.

ERNÖ. Incredible.

LEAR. Believe me, those two anecdotes pained me more than they pain you.

BURGUNDY. Believe him, rude stranger.

ERNÖ. I believe, and accept it in extenuation. There is, in the depth of all this, a social truth—one of those

which I, too, espouse in seeking to spread the cult of Shakespeare in this social welter of ours. This is noble anguish, even though you enacted it with exaggeration. And I forgive you it.

LEAR. Admirable and wise words.

ERNÖ. I should only like to know why it was necessary to recite anything at all? Did not the respect and attraction for my wife spring from your soul? Why did you not speak to her from out of your soul?

LEAR. My soul, our souls, sir, are not so obedient as to unfold at first call. You see, sir, I must, year in, year out, speak from the souls of others. Whenever I open my mouth, my soul rushes forward to say something . . . but now it is Shakespeare who silences it by a "pst, I am speaking now!"—then Molière rebukes it, and again Bernard Shaw or Madách. . . . Always, whenever I stand here with eyes ablaze, my whole being as in a fever, my head raised high and longing to pour out my soul . . . always, I say, some one else speaks out of me. And so finally one's own little soul is offended, becomes a recluse, and does not even dare to come to the gate again; it broods and grows old. Yes, my good sir, it is very difficult to coax it forth again. Words pour easily from the actor. But that is something else. That is how it is, sir. And, as you probably realize, with this confession my lovely royal robe has also fallen away.

ERNÖ. What a painful confession. All of a sudden those filthy little anecdotes seem quite different to me. Once again I forgive you the both.

LEAR. What noble and profound thinking.

[*Wipes his eyes.*]

BURGUNDY. You are weeping, my lord.

LEAR [*to ERNÖ*]. "I am ashamed that thou hast the power to shake my manhood thus, that these hot tears which break from me perforce, should make thee worth them.—Blasts and fogs upon thee!"

ERNÖ. Why these curses?

BURGUNDY. They are pet phrases of our author, which detracts nothing from his greatness.

[*LEAR wipes tears.*]

ERNÖ. That, you see, does not affect me in the least. An actor knows well how to shed tears; that is all.

LEAR. No, sir. Any one can cry. But to us it is like the throat to the man who swallows knives. We practice crying so long that it no longer pains us; else acting would destroy us. Do you know where the fault lies? In that crying fails to move us even when we might relish the pain of tears. [*Wipes his tears, almost whimpering.*] That is why I find no relief . . . in crying privately . . .

HELEN [*looks at LEAR through her lorgnette*]. And yet . . . they are real tears.

LEAR. Yes, madame. But my eye is no spring, only a water carrier.

ERNÖ. What bloody frankness!

LEAR. Precisely. It was my intention to stand before you stripped of all comedy. And so even my tears have been compromised.

ERNÖ. There is much that I see more clearly than before, but one thing still puzzles me. If what you say is true, why did you take part of my wife's ear between your teeth?

HELEN. Between his teeth? You are insane! He did no such a thing! Never!

LEAR. It is an exaggeration. I whispered those Oriental anecdotes and it is possible that, though not encouraged, I leaned close to madame's ear with unbecoming familiarity. If I touched it, I beg her pardon . . . [*Bows. To HELEN.*] . . . and I beseech you . . . [*Majestically strides off the throne, extending his hand to her. ERNÖ steps back in fear.*] forgive me.

BURGUNDY. How great and noble you are, oh, king! The Duke of Burgundy bends his knee before such humanity.

[*Drops on one knee. LEAR and ERNÖ clasp hands.*]

LEAR [*to BURGUNDY*]. Rise.

[*Helps BURGUNDY to his feet.*]

BURGUNDY. This man does not know what a noble soul confronts him. Why, he is just a mediocre little professor.

ERNÖ. Plague upon you. Leave me in peace.

LEAR [*steps back on the platform*]. There, now, nothing can stop us from going about our individual affairs. After this little escapade, you and the lady will return amicably to the tranquillity of your domestic life, while I shall continue on my path. To-day I shall interpret the great poet with redoubled admiration, for I owe it to the shadow of his gigantic figure that your first impulse was checked long enough for me to receive a hearing. For this I am indebted to you, William Shakespeare. [*To ERNÖ.*] And to you I am, despite all make-up and power of impersonation, Kálmán Bánáti, the man. I stand stark naked. In fact, I feel as if I had no skin on me.

BURGUNDY. God forbid, my lord.

[*Ring of a bell.*]

LEAR. That's the third bell. The curtain will go up soon and from this stage, where our own little comedy has just been enacted, will speak the immortal.

ERNÖ. I admit to have been weak. But I am not ashamed that my anger was stifled by such awe. If I behaved stupidly, it was an exceedingly high degree of cultured stupidity. However, let us not exaggerate. The fact that I yielded to this theatrical spell is due to a great extent also to my love for this heedless, superficial woman. I am utterly weak where she is concerned. It may sound dreadful, but I admit that I would have forgiven her in any case, for I cannot live without her. You gentlemen merely lightened the task of my soul. You helped diminish my disgrace by your spurious appearance and speech. I thank you. It is most likely that I could have neither driven the woman away nor given you a beating without the help of this comedy. But the other way I would have felt most wretched; now I have an alibi. I have had to make this declaration so as not to seem ridiculous in your eyes. I am no dunce, though more than once this evening I may have appeared to be. According to Shakespeare, man is a mixture of animal and poet. I believe these elements were mingled in proper proportion in me this evening. [*To HELEN.*] Come dear, nothing has really happened.

LEAR. Only a slight flirtation. Or less than that.

ERNÖ. God be with you. I shall not wish to see you for a long time; indeed, I believe, never again.

LEAR. Not even in my rôles?

ERNÖ. I am sorry to say, no. I should like to preserve this comforting picture of you. This benign old face from which the word *flirtation* escaped in such an incredible manner.

[HELEN *laughs*.]

ERNÖ [*sternly*]. Don't laugh. I am ashamed that you do not grasp what has happened here. [*To LEAR*.] God be with you. If we should meet in civilian clothes, please do not greet me. I shall not recognize you.

LEAR. But really you ought to see me . . . in one of my best rôles . . . say in "King Lear" at least . . .

ERNÖ. Perhaps . . . I may . . . after some years . . . but in no other rôle. . . . Imagine what a nightmare I might have had, had you have been cast as Romeo instead of as Lear to-night. Think of arguing with me in that other costume. Oh, what dreadful days would have been in store for me! I don't dare contemplate it. God be with you. And forgive my wife for laughing at you.

LEAR. "Thou hast her; let her be thine; for we have no such daughter, nor shall ever see that face of hers again. Therefore be gone without our grace, our love, our benison. Come, noble Burgundy."

[*With a great flourish, exits at right, followed by BURGUNDY*.]

HELEN. Well, if that isn't the limit . . .

ERNÖ [*clutches her*]. Let him go. Don't show that you're offended, for that will betray your ignorance. What he just said is from the first act of "King Lear." Come.

[*Exits with HELEN at left. The FIREMAN emerges from behind the throne*.]

FIREMAN. LIB.

This here professor seemed like a fool at first,

But later he improved considerably. His talk, though windy, sounded rational.

As for his heart I judge it to be pure. The woman is moronic, not worth noticing;

A most audacious fellow is that actor, And how the others all fell out together

Trying to help him. Oh, miserable world!

For the one-hundreth time I thank the Lord

That I am just a plain, untutored rustic

Unable to make head or tail of all That's been recited here through twenty years;

Nor have I caught the least bit of their madness.

What care I for the poet and his pageantry,

Which fires the brain, upsetting people's minds

And which to them is sacred and so wonderful!

Fie on it all! Fie on the damn confusion,

With culture, consciousness and all the rest,

A goodly steak and half a quart of wine,

A spruced-up kitchen and a homely wife,

Warm slippers and a tranquil bed at night,

If only not too passionate a night—

With these assured, I should not mind at all

To be with them another twenty years

And, sagely smiling, to feel compassion

For these pitiable players here.

STAGE MANAGER [*enters at left*].
Clear the stage. The performance
is about to begin. [*Places chairs in
proper place. FIREMAN exits at right.*]

STAGE MANAGER *on way out at left.*]
Curtain!
[*Exits.*]

CURTAIN

M A R S H A L

Translated by

LOUIS RITTENBERG

Not yet produced in America.

CHARACTERS

BARON SAN-FRIANO

EDITH, *his wife*

IMRE LITVAY, *an actor*

DR. JÁNOSY, *a physician*

MANSERVANT

A SOLDIER

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

The action takes place in the baron's hunting lodge

[SCENE: *Hall of a hunting lodge. Two fireplaces and two armchairs in the rear. Door at left. Also door at left back, accessible by stairs. Door at right leads to living quarters. Suites of furniture—divans and chairs—at right and left. A small table at right. It is ten o'clock in the evening.*

At the rise of curtain EDITH is alone in the hall. She sits in front of a fireplace and reads. After a slight pause, MANSERVANT enters at left.]

SERVANT. I beg pardon, madame, Mr. Litvay is here.

EDITH [*rises*]. Mr. Litvay? How?

SERVANT. He arrived by the Budapest Express.

EDITH. Show him in.

[SERVANT *opens the door*. LITVAY *enters*.]

LITVAY. I kiss your hand. And I crave your pardon for coming in this surprising fashion.

[*Kisses EDITH's hand.*]

EDITH. Welcome, Litvay. [*To SERVANT, who has stopped in the doorway.*] Wait. [*To LITVAY.*] I hope you have not dined yet.

LITVAY. Yes, I have. I ate in the dining car.

EDITH. Well, then, perhaps some coffee, or tea?

LITVAY. Tea, if you please.

EDITH [*to SERVANT*]. Together with ours. [*SERVANT exits.*] As for the surprise, nothing more pleasant could have happened to me. I am grateful that you have come, grateful for your having come now, and for being here.

LITVAY. You are not angry that I rush in at such a late hour? [*Looks at his watch.*] It is past ten. The train was slightly late, too. Of course, you folks out here, in the wilderness, retire early.

EDITH. Oh, no. We are always up until midnight. But how did you happen to precede the others?

LITVAY. The others will not ar-

rive until to-morrow morning. They are about to board the train at Budapest. [*Looks at his watch.*] In ten minutes their train will depart from the Oriental depot. Yesterday we had planned to travel together, but at noon to-day I suddenly changed my mind and so escaped from them. I simply cannot ride on that crowded train at night. It carries no sleepers, the windows cannot be closed right, the heating and ventilation are atrocious, and you know an actor dreads nothing more than a cold. After a bumpy night trip like that, one feels like a beaten cur; besides it is a much longer ride than on the express. In other words . . .

[*Looks at EDITH.*]

EDITH [*smiling*]. In other words?

LITVAY. In other words, there isn't a word of truth in all that I have said, dear Edith. I came because I could no longer control myself, because I wanted to be here earlier than the others, because I wanted to spend the night here near you, without that hunting crowd, because I love you, because I am completely infatuated, because there is not an hour of the day that . . .

[*Clutches her hand.*]

EDITH. Please, be careful. My husband is in his room.

LITVAY. I implore you not to tell him yet that I am here. Let the next few minutes be mine only, so that I may gaze at you in my own way, so that I may hold your hand and . . .

EDITH. Litvay, you are making me uneasy. Please sit down. Your passionate words sound so strange in the vast wintry silence in which I live here.

LITVAY. Don't be amazed that I am so foolish. It is eleven days

since you and the baron left Budapest; eleven days since I saw you last. Oh, you are so beautiful. Your gaze, so radiant and unafraid.

EDITH. It is the mountains, these huge cold mountains, that cause that. The air is so bracing here. You are pale.

LITVAY. Because I stay up nights. I cannot eat. Edith, I am in agony. Ever since that Thursday when you entered my room . . .

EDITH. For heaven's sake, Litvay, do be cautious. You come from the noisy city. Silence is supreme ruler here. The rooms, the walls . . . everything is mute. . . . My husband is in his room busy with some calculations. He may be here any minute.

LITVAY. You don't want to be reminded of the visit you paid me.

EDITH. How can you . . .

LITVAY. You regret it.

EDITH. Yes, but that does not mean that I do not want to hear about it. I only ask you to be discreet. How sensitive you are.

LITVAY. This is that stage of love when one can scarcely be anything but sensitive. Vanity is always sensitive, but most sensitive in its present phase of starvation. My hungry vanity requires that I talk of that Thursday. All the way here, there was sweet agony in the thought of how blissful it would be to talk to you about that visit to my home—when you finally came to me.

EDITH. Poor Litvay. I spent exactly a hundred and twenty seconds there. You recall we kept our eyes on the small hand of the watch. Just two minutes.

LITVAY. But you were there. You sat in my armchair and I held your

hand. Had it been a hundred and twenty years, it would have sped by just as fast. God, how happy I am to be here now!

EDITH. Tell me . . . were you not supposed to appear in a play to-night?

LITVAY. How do you know?

EDITH. Every day I look at the dramatic programs in the papers. To-night it was to have been "Cyrano," in which you have the title rôle.

LITVAY [*seizes her hand*]. Dearest, you make me so happy. So you have kept track of my appearances?

EDITH. As you see.

LITVAY. Lord . . . at this distance, high up in the mountains, do you always know when I play?

EDITH. Indeed, I even see you.

LITVAY. How? . . .

EDITH. Look what I have been reading.

[*Hands LITVAY a book.*]

LITVAY. "Cyrano de Bergerac"!

EDITH. On nights when you play, I go into our library and select the play. When far away in Budapest the performance begins, I sit near the fire here and I read, I see, and I hear.

LITVAY. Edith, you are driving me mad.

EDITH. But you fooled me. You did not play.

LITVAY. I declined to-night's appearance on the ground of having a husky throat. Never in all my life have I done anything like it. Never. I am the most punctilious, the most conscientious actor. But, as I said before, I am done for. Edith, I don't know what will become of me.

EDITH. Because of me . . . you have forsaken applause and triumph?

LITVAY. What does it all mean as compared to that one sweet moment?

Or to the fact that I am spending this lovely winter evening here at the fireplace with you? Or that I shall be sleeping under one roof with you here among these bleak mountains, in this lonely castle?

EDITH. You talk as if only the two of us were here among the bleak mountains. Remember, the baron is also here . . . among these bleak mountains.

LITVAY. The baron.

EDITH. And to-morrow there will be here nine other strident gentlemen, hungry hunters, thirsty guests, inveterate jokesmiths, smokers, gamblers, whisky guzzlers . . .

LITVAY. There you are. Now you know why I came ahead of them.

EDITH. My husband will think it strange.

LITVAY. He does not watch the theatrical schedules.

EDITH. You can never tell what he may be doing. My husband is very suave and taciturn. For six years now I have been looking into his eyes, but I have not yet fathomed their depth. My husband . . .

LITVAY. Is sixty years old.

EDITH. Yes, sixty years old.

[*Pause.*]

LITVAY [*rises*]. I shudder to think of it when I look at you. That's what is ruining me. Sixty years old! Lord, I can't bear the thought of it!

EDITH. But he won first prize among the fashionable equestrians.

LITVAY. This glowing, beautiful, young life . . .

EDITH. Splendid stock. His father, at the age of ninety, defeated his fencing master every morning.

LITVAY. I abhor these eternally youthful old men.

EDITH. His father died at the age of a hundred and four. He thinks he will reach only a hundred because there is a tinge of Austrian blood in him.

LITVAY. And you, here, by his side . . .

EDITH. He wakes at dawn and drinks no alcohol; he fences, rides and hunts and lifts weights. He says he comes of the finest Italian stock, from which have stemmed cardinals of the greatest longevity, those that outlive three popes. He pities his neighbors, Hungarian gentry, because they eat and drink and die at an early age.

LITVAY. No, Edith, this cannot go on. You must not remain with him.

EDITH. Please don't hurt me, Litvay.

[Rises.]

LITVAY. This velvety warmth, this young blood, in the arms of tenacious old age . . .

EDITH. Be quiet, please.

LITVAY. I will not be quiet. I cannot be, Edith. It is shocking to hear those beautiful, bursting lips sing the praises of old age . . . how strong and how manly he is . . .

EDITH. Litvay . . .

LITVAY. The picture that comes to my mind at a time like this is so tormenting that I can't bear it. You will come with me, Edith. I shall carry you off, I shall abduct you. You shall be mine . . . my wife . . .

EDITH. No.

LITVAY. Why do you praise him? Is it out of coquetry? Is it necessary? Why, I am mad already. Your very look makes my blood boil . . .

EDITH [*uneasily*]. Your voice, your gaze . . . they are like fire. Litvay, you upset my whole life.

LITVAY. Does it offend you to hear me speak?

EDITH. It sets me afire. I am as in a daze . . .

LITVAY. Do you love me?

EDITH. You have an extraordinary effect on me. Sometimes I feel I am completely in your power. That is when and why I speak of my husband as a form of escape. It is not coquetry.

LITVAY. It is no use struggling, no use trying to escape. I think you lie. This singular nervousness, this changing look in your eyes . . . now like that of a nun, then like that of a witch . . . it is because you repress your blood and your emotions; every minute you slay a thought.

EDITH. Don't, please don't hurt me . . .

LITVAY. As through a defective stove, your inner flames can be seen through a hundred rifts. I know what makes you smile. Once before you have extinguished such a fire.

EDITH. Twice. Yes, twice before.

LITVAY. It was the man's fault, believe me. But you will not succeed this time. You will not extinguish this fire.

EDITH. It will be difficult. It will be dreadful. But unfailing, nevertheless.

LITVAY. Not at all. I am inclined to believe that you merely wanted to play with this fire, just to amuse yourself. But in my case, the thing became serious. And you will come with me, you will divorce him. I may not be able to replace his millions, but I am not poor. You shall have just as many genuine pearls as

before, and just as much lace—I swear it. And if it is true that you have a great desire to get on the stage . . .

EDITH. Imre, please do not torment me. Don't make me rebel.

LITVAY. Oh, if only it were true that I make you rebel, I would plead with you two days and two nights without a stop. But I fear that the things you say stir your blood only for a fleeting moment. You probably cool off the moment I quit talking.

EDITH. While listening to you, I am entirely under your spell. When you go away, I feel a great weariness sometimes.

LITVAY. Oh, Edith, I see all that very clearly. If you were really in love. . . .

EDITH. I am in love.

[*Pause. LITVAY quickly steps close to EDITH and kisses her hand.*]

LITVAY. You will leave him. You will come with me. You will be mine.

EDITH. No.

[*Pause.*]

LITVAY. This is terrible. This ice-cold "No" after such burning words.

EDITH [*nervously*]. Please allow me to send for my husband.

LITVAY. Have you had enough of me?

EDITH. I am uneasy. Talking so much to you does me no good.

LITVAY. It is no use, for I shan't rest. Always and everywhere, I shall be at your heels. I shall utilize every moment in order to whisper into your ears, to call you . . . You can see now that I am not offering

you mere petty adventure. I want your life in return for my own.

EDITH. I don't want to hear that sort of talk.

LITVAY. Your eyes belie your words.

EDITH. Please, Imre, beware of me. Take what you can get and ask for no more. Don't you see how candidly I confess my love for you? And just as frankly do I ask you not to incite me. Leave me in my present mode of life. Right now it may not be too late for me to recover . . .

LITVAY. Recover?

EDITH. As yet . . . perhaps. It has been enough. I enjoyed it. I needed it. But, as for more? . . . No, no, no! Let there be some one to be ablaze near me, but only while it does not hurt. Let everything burn and glow, but only while my eyes can bear it. Imre, beware of me.

LITVAY. I am not afraid of death by fire. And it is because I know that the fight must not be given up that I am here now. I shall persist without any respite. I shan't let you grow cold, Edith. I shall pursue you with my burning determination. I shall remain here. No, Edith, I shan't even go to hunt to-morrow. You may as well know. I have come here resolved to make this the final great struggle. I shall find a pretext for remaining home, here beside you, all day to-morrow. And I am willing to stake my life that our fates will be definitely determined. We shall either not meet again or you will accompany me to become my wife.

EDITH [*uneasily*]. You are not going to the hunt?

LITVAY. No.

EDITH. I implore you not to do

that. Please be very, very careful. For my sake as well as for your own.

LITVAY. I don't want to be careful. Now I want to stake my all, even my life. I know I cannot possibly attain you without setting everything on fire.

EDITH. Not so loud, for the love of God . . . my husband . . .

[*Moves to go toward right.*]

LITVAY. I care for nothing. I fear no one.

[*Kisses her.*]

EDITH [*wrenches herself loose*]. Madman!

[*A slight pause, after which she rings a bell.*]

LITVAY. Yes, I am mad.

[*Sits down.*]

EDITH. If my husband should step in now, he would read everything in our faces. His eyes are like a hawk's.

LITVAY. Do not forget also that I am an actor.

EDITH. And don't you forget that you are a man. Go to your suite and I'll tell him that you are dressing.

[*SERVANT enters, bringing tea.*]

A SOLDIER fetches the tea table.]

EDITH. Please show Mr. Litvay to his quarters.

[*SERVANT climbs up the stairs, while SOLDIER exits.*]

LITVAY. Until we meet again.

[*Exits with SERVANT. EDITH, in front of mirror, fixes her hair. SERVANT returns and stops.*]

EDITH. Tell my husband tea is ready.

[*SERVANT exits at right. EDITH arranges the tea set. BARON enters.*]

BARON [*a man of sixty—snow-*

white hair and dressed with extreme elegance; very youthful. He gazes at tea set]. Three cups?

EDITH. Yes.

BARON. Whose is the third?

EDITH. How is that? Have you not spoken to Litvay yet?

BARON. No. In other words, Mr. Litvay has arrived, eh?

EDITH. I thought you had seen him. He is just dressing.

BARON. So Mr. Litvay is here. How interesting. He was not due until to-morrow morning with the rest of the guests. But he is here already.

EDITH. He says he dreads traveling at night.

BARON [*sharply*]. Have you spoken to him already?

EDITH. Yes.

[*Pause. Then the BARON reaches for tea.*]

BARON [*sarcastically*]. Of what is Mr. Litvay afraid?

EDITH. Artists, actors such as he, are afraid of catching colds. He says that traveling on a train at night invariably gives him a cold. That is why he took an earlier express.

BARON [*sarcastically*]. An earlier express.

EDITH. How strangely you talk.

BARON. Who?

EDITH. You.

[*A slight pause.*]

BARON. Well, then, listen to me, my dear. First of all, I am glad that you have noticed how strangely I speak.

EDITH. It was not difficult.

BARON. That, too, makes me glad. And what I am about to say will be even easier to understand. Sit down, my child, and listen closely. I shall

begin with what I consider of less importance.

EDITH. I warn you that Litvay is in his room and may enter any minute.

BARON. You seem to be watching the adjoining rooms. A moment ago, quite sensibly, you watched that one.

[*Points to room whence he had entered.*]

EDITH. What do you mean by that?

BARON. Let us not digress. As I said before, I shall begin with what is of less consequence. With the simple statement that this actor friend kissed you here a while ago.

EDITH. It is not true.

BARON. I said it does not matter because it is not the essential point. He is an inflammable young man in love; an artist. And you happen to be unusually pretty to-day. And the way you two have been carrying on for two months now . . .

EDITH. I resent your insinuation.

BARON. That was admirably put. But it is no use. I see things more clearly than you do. You do not as yet suspect that you are having a flirtation with some one, but I do. It is like becoming accustomed to strong perfumes. The one who uses it no longer notices the keen scent, but others are aware of it all the more. But no matter how insensitive you have become to such things, it was difficult not to notice that you have been kissed.

EDITH [*rises*]. I have told you that . . .

BARON. One moment, please. It may be superfluous to say what is on your tongue. Coming from my room, I walked slowly in this direction when suddenly I heard the

sound of violent conversation. Had it not changed abruptly to a whisper, I might have thought nothing queer about it. But there was sudden silence. I did not see, but I did hear you being kissed. These forcible kisses have a singular sound that cannot be mistaken. There is something specially distinctive about the sudden lull in conversation, in the thud of heavy physical motion on the floor, in the desire to scream on the part of one whose resistance is stifled. There can be no mistake about these.

EDITH [*firmly*]. What if there is?

BARON. After that you called him a madman. And he replied, "Yes, I am mad."

EDITH. I called him that because . . .

BARON. Then, quite sensibly, you sent him to his room. There is nothing gained by straining feminine craftiness. The less so since I do not regard this as of utmost importance. [*Touches the tea cup.*] Please, my dear, spare yourself all excitement. Be seated. Take an example from me. Let us discuss things calmly. Sit down, my child.

[*EDITH sits down.*]

BARON [*having had a sip of tea*]. The more important phase of this matter is the fact that you visited that actor at his home in Budapest.

EDITH [*rises*]. It's dreadful, the way you treat me.

BARON. Do not excite yourself, my dear. You may leave that for later. Everything in due time. It will be called for soon enough. Let us not act in haste. You were at Litvay's home. Am I right?

EDITH. Yes, but if you knew how it happened . . .

BARON. If I did not know, I would not be so deadly calm. I also know that it was a perfectly innocent call: you were back in the street just four minutes after you had entered through his gate.

EDITH. You had me trailed.

BARON. You ought to be glad I did, for I should have never taken your own word for it. It is the stopwatch of my detective that now saves your face.

EDITH. Please stop tormenting me. I can't bear this false frigidity, this sham calmness in your voice. Tell me what you want of me. Kill me or drive me out into the night. But I cannot bear this.

BARON. I shan't kill you because I cannot live without you. That you know. It is a waste of energy to say such foolish things. To drive you out into the night? So as to let Litvay dash after you and triumphantly lead you to his unpretentious home? How can you fancy anything like that? But I will act, of that you may be sure.

EDITH. Do as you please, but don't torment me.

[*Shifts to left.*]

BARON. If that fellow intended to make you his mistress, I should have nothing to fear. I would simply leave him to you. I know how discomfited he would be. My boundless admiration for you springs from two instances in which such demands were made on you, and your molesters were forced to slink away crestfallen, though you had been in love in both cases.

EDITH. And now?

BARON. You are in love now, too.

EDITH. Well, then, why don't you trust me now?

BARON. Because this actor is not out for adventure. I don't know how you feel about it, but I do believe him that. Please believe him. He is no scoundrel, but an enthusiastic, warm-hearted, splendid young man. He wants to wrest you from me in order to make you his wife. [*Rises.*] And that, my child, is why I see fit to interfere, which I did not do in the two earlier instances.

EDITH. There is no need for it now, either.

BARON. You are wrong, my dear. I tell you, as would your own father, that it is necessary. You have been somewhat chilly here beside me. I know. And you like the warmth of such things. This might be dangerous to any other woman. But not to you. You are respectable. Sensuous but extremely respectable. And wise. I flatter myself also to believe that you are afraid of me, which is quite sensible, too. And how well you know it. But here I am confronted with the first alarming symptom.

EDITH. You are mistaken.

BARON. You know right well I am not. This actor had coached you for a single amateur rôle and you fell in love, at one swoop, with him and with his profession. I know that in your heart you always yearned for the stage. Had I not married you, you might have become an actress. You often said so.

EDITH. I did.

BARON. And at the moment everything in your little soul is at white heat. Here is this lovely, splendid, elegant young man and his great pure love, and a colorfully beckoning perspective with which to be united on the stage . . . in love, success, triumph. . . . Had I waited another

hour, you would have been lost to me, my child.

EDITH. And what is it that you intend to do?

BARON. We'll get to that, too. You can hardly expect me to protest my love to you now. Nor shall I. I merely want to indicate briefly that the sunset of my life belongs to you. Without you I would not care to live another hour. These sentiments require no pretty words. There is no deadlier love than mine. At my age life is tremendously precious and love is synonymous with life. He who is in love at sixty is bound to die with it. Of course, one aims to do so as late as possible. I have no time to condone adventures, penitence and redemption. In my own defense, I must be merciless, for my time is short.

EDITH. You are becoming much too serious. I don't like it. So far you have spoken light-heartedly and sensibly. I loved you for the things you just said. But this is different. Quite unusual for you.

BARON. Edith, I'll not give you up for the sake of that actor. You may not yet be aware of it, but I know that you intend to go with him.

EDITH. You think you know it better than I do?

BARON. Much better. This is the first man in six years who is dangerous so far as I am concerned. And highly dangerous, at that. I feel his cold blade on my neck. Our ancestors knew what to do in such cases. The Frenchman made a vogue of the heart. They used to cut out the hearts of such young men and served them to their wives for supper.

EDITH. How cold-bloodedly you say that.

BARON. My own ancestors down in Southern Italy were less theatrical. One San-Friano poured pulverized diamond into the food of his Litvay. The diamond, my child, is an extraordinary stone in every respect. If ground to dust, it becomes a heap of tiny sharp grains which, when swallowed, gradually cut through the intestines. It may take a month until it does its work. But then, that method became passé with the Renaissance, alas.

[*Bows his head.*]

EDITH. I have never heard you talk in this tone. Alexander, I am afraid of you now.

BARON. I am too old to engage in a duel. Not too old for the mere act of fencing or to wield a pistol, but too old to die. No, my child, I have no desire to die under any circumstances. I wouldn't think of it. Twenty years ago . . . yes, any day. But not now. This is perfectly plausible, isn't it? The gaming instinct is no longer in my blood. Just because some one takes a fancy to my wife, I will not get in the way of his bullet . . . to kill me and to take away my wife to boot. No, such virtues I have not acquired, not even while at the Austrian Court. My forbears, dear, were merchants. Armed traders. They were noted for having beaten the robber barons who tried to plunder them. Yes, my child, we defend ourselves.

EDITH [*rises in alarm*]. All that you have been saying points to some dreadful purpose. You, who are usually so taciturn, have said so much . . . and what strange things. . . .

BARON. Frankly, I could just as well have been silent about them. But, because I am so intensely in love

with you, I had to tell you. In this most momentous hour of my life I wish to inform you that I shall take action. For you must realize that I do not act haphazardly. You have to be informed. You must feel my strength, my terrific power over life and death. I want to grow in your eyes. I want to take on stature, broad shoulders, red cheeks . . . youth. You must see how determined I am and how I act.

EDITH. Good heavens . . . Alexander. . . . What are you going to do?

BARON. I feel that you already know.

EDITH. Don't . . . don't talk like that, for God's sake. I tremble in every limb at the sound of such a tone. . . . What do you want? What are you planning to do?

BARON. Do you know "Marshal"?

EDITH. Alexander. . . .

BARON. You know who Marshal is. My handsome, graceful British rifle, with which I shall go hunting to-morrow.

EDITH. You will not go hunting!

BARON. Who? I?

EDITH. Not you, either.

BARON. You are wrong. I, too, will be there. All of us will be there. It will be a splendid hunt. A fine old-fashioned, serious and manly hunt.

EDITH [*excited*]. Alexander, I scarcely recognize you. You have lost your sanity, your fine seriousness for which I loved you so. You have simply lost your footing. Something seems to have snapped in you, or you wouldn't be talking like this all of a sudden. . . . God!

BARON. Yes, something has snapped in me.

EDITH [*excited*]. I beg of you, come to your senses. . . . Be once again the sweet and sensible man. . . . You exaggerate this whole thing, and I implore you not to plunge yourself into a delusion! This man interests me no more than those that I have thrown out.

BARON. You lie, my dear child.

EDITH. If you wish, I'll . . .

BARON. Don't swear, for that offends my good taste.

EDITH. If you wish it, I'll send him away this very night, and promise not to see him again. . . .

BARON. All of which is possible. Yet, if I do nothing now, I'll be done for.

EDITH. But, for the love of God, . . . what's happening to us right now?

BARON. That which is inevitable.

EDITH. I ought to get down on my knees now, to kiss your hands . . . and to scream . . . Alexander . . . this is monstrous . . . and you'd think that I fear for my lover. . . . But I swear that I fear what may happen to you as a result of what you intend to do! Yes, it is you that I am concerned about! I can't bear this. Why, it is dreadful that I should suddenly be overwhelmed like this. . . .

BARON. I had to tell you. And you must follow me everywhere. Even to hell.

EDITH. I'll send him away or throw him out now, immediately. . . .

BARON. And I'll follow him.

EDITH. Don't you believe me?

BARON. I envy you for believing yourself. And I adore your susceptibility. In another week, you would be saying "How odd, I should have

never believed that I could leave my husband!"

EDITH [*nervously*]. Have pity on me, please. Believe me. Allow me to swear by all that is dear to me, by the memory of my mother . . .

BARON [*places a hand on her lips*]. You need not go through all that. [*Pause.*] And now I plainly forbid you to mention another word of this.

EDITH [*very excited*]. No, no, no . . . a hundred times no! . . .

BARON [*grimly*]. I forbid it! Do you understand?

[EDITH *looks at him in fear, then walks over to the fireplace. Pause. LITVAY enters.*]

BARON [*while LITVAY descends the stairs*]. What a long time it took our dear artist to spruce up. Good evening. [*They clasp hands.*] I am told that our local passenger train rather frightened you.

LITVAY. Quite right, my dear baron. It is like a snake—cold and slowly crawling.

BARON [*points to EDITH*]. You have spoken to my wife already, have you not?

LITVAY. Oh, yes, I've had the pleasure. [*Steps to the tea table.*] Will you permit me to pour a little of this, if it is not cold yet?

EDITH [*steps forward*]. This lid keeps it warm. But, if you wish, I'll have some fresh tea boiled.

LITVAY. Oh, not at all. Thank you. This is probably quite delicious. [*Touches the pot.*] It is hot, too.

[*Pause.*]

BARON. Are you satisfied with your quarters?

LITVAY. Captivating. Those charming red flowered curtains and the spacious bed. . . .

BARON. So you are in the red room?

LITVAY. Yes.

BARON. Then you have my old bachelor bed.

LITVAY. Congratulations.

BARON. It has been in retirement.

EDITH. What shall it be—rum, milk, red wine or lemon?

LITVAY. Red wine, if you please. Three lumps of sugar.

EDITH. I know.

LITVAY. You, my dear baron, seem to be in splendid condition. Of course, being outdoors all day. . . .

BARON. Hardly. For days now we have had sleet. And I don't like it. Dry, crisp, sharp cold . . . that's what makes an ideal winter. Your coloring is somewhat urban.

LITVAY. Indoor air.

EDITH. Cafés and clubs.

LITVAY. Oh, very seldom. One gets to fear these smoky places. My throat is very sensitive, too.

BARON. Because you artists do not go in for calisthenics.

LITVAY. I do try that also. But every time I begin physical exercises, I usually catch a cold and I am no good for the stage for a fortnight. Frankly speaking, this hunt that is scheduled for to-morrow will be in the nature of an experiment to me.

BARON. I've been studying the barometer all day. Unusually fine weather may be expected.

LITVAY. Coming up north here by train, right after Felvár beyond the curve across the bridge, one is struck by a cold wave. It is a sudden change of temperature.

BARON. Because at that point both train and road forsake the shielded valley for the wide open spaces

through which there is a constant galloping of winds.

LITVAY. My throat was affected immediately as we came out.

EDITH [*with a pretense of cordiality*]. Heaven forbid that anything happen to you. I would not wish to burden my soul with the feeling that your audiences may be deprived of your art, because of us, for even a solitary evening.

LITVAY. You are exceedingly kind. But, really, I am not putting on airs. I am the slave of this strange instrument of mine. [*Points to his throat.*] I should be greatly annoyed if it were to prevent me from joining the hunt to-morrow. All the way up here it made me happy to think of it . . . of that invigorating, revivifying something which one feels only at a hunt.

BARON. You'll be quite all right by the morning.

LITVAY. God willing. But I scarcely think so, for it seems to be behaving rather suspiciously. This is an erratic and stubborn animal. I am familiar with its symptoms. . . .

BARON. And are they in evidence now?

LITVAY. I am afraid so.

BARON. And so you will not join us to-morrow?

LITVAY. I am a slave, sir.

BARON [*dejected*]. There, you see, that's what happens to the man who is afraid of a local train. He catches a cold on the express.

LITVAY. It's too late now. Let us say no more about it. In any case, I shall wait until to-morrow. If by then it still misbehaves . . . why, I shall simply have to stick in the house all day, here beside the cheery flames . . . and I shall be thinking

with heavy heart of the jovial hunters.

BARON. I should regret not to have you with us.

LITVAY. It is most annoying . . . that one is dependent for his liveliness on such a delicate little instrument.

BARON. Under no conditions must you force it. If you cannot make it, why, you will have to remain here. [*A slight pause.*] You will remain at the fireside.

EDITH. You will play chess with the Lord Lieutenant's wife.

LITVAY. God forbid! Don't condemn me to that, please.

BARON. What a pity. For I had definitely counted on you. I have even allotted a place to you.

LITVAY. You will manage without me.

BARON. It will upset things a bit. But no matter.

EDITH. My husband is a stickler for order and precision. It is his passion.

BARON. So it is. But no matter. You ought to be doubly sorry, for I had intended giving you one of my best guns.

LITVAY. In any case, I am grateful for your thoughtfulness.

BARON. And . . . [*Rises.*] . . . and since you have turned it down, let me at least introduce you. Please wait a moment. . . .

[*Exits at right. EDITH follows the BARON with her eyes, listens, then goes to the door through which he has left.*]

LITVAY. What is it?

EDITH [*places a finger on her lips. Slight pause. Excited, whispers*]. Leave the place, early in the morning, at once.

LITVAY. Why? What's happened?

EDITH. The worst that could happen. My husband had been eavesdropping. When you kissed me. Ask no questions. Leave at once.

LITVAY. But please. . . .

EDITH. He knows everything. Everything. I beg of you, for God's sake, not to say a word but go away immediately . . . I implore you . . . Imre . . . if you love me . . . immediately. . . .

LITVAY. Immediately? But what's happened?

EDITH. Yes, now, at once. Go, for the love of heaven, because I am telling you to go.

LITVAY. Did he see me kiss you?

[EDITH suddenly places a finger on her lips, thereby commanding LITVAY to silence; then she hurries away from the door. Pause. They stand mutely. BARON enters, bringing two rifles.]

BARON. Here you are. The two prima donnas. One is Marshal, the other Colonel.

LITVAY. Colonel? What do you mean? Have they ranks?

BARON. Right. Look. This Colonel is the one I had intended to let you use to-morrow.

[Hands LITVAY one of the guns. The other remains in his own hand.]

LITVAY. A splendid specimen.

BARON. Made by "Holland and Holland." Both. I don't care what people may say about Belgian or American firearms, so far as I am concerned there is only one rifle in all the world—the British. And only one among theirs, too. The "Holland and Holland" brand. There

will be nothing better in the next hundred years.

LITVAY. And that one is Marshal?

BARON. This. You had better look at it with respect. It came to me as a private, just like the others. But I have been promoting them after every hunt, in keeping with their performance. This is how that one there became Colonel, and this one Marshal.

LITVAY. That's as high as it can ever advance.

BARON. Yes.

LITVAY. I take it that you will use it to-morrow.

BARON. Naturally. Marshal is not only the best rifle, but also the best friend. Marshal is not eccentric, nor disloyal. Marshal is as punctilious as an engineer, and dependable as death.

LITVAY [returns Colonel to BARON]. You talk of it with such earnest affection.

BARON. This is more than affection. It is friendship.

LITVAY. I can appreciate that, though I am only a *Sonntagsjager*, as the Germans would say.

BARON [with Marshal in his hand]. It is like a human being. Not like all human beings. Only like one.

EDITH [nervously]. I abhor every weapon. I abhor every weapon.

BARON. My, but you are nervous, my dear.

EDITH. I don't want to see it. Please!

LITVAY. Strange. For even as a spectacle it is splendid, this fine, graceful and grim instrument.

EDITH. I shudder at sight of them. The thoughts they provoke are frightful.

BARON. It may be *that* to feminine sensibility. I for one consider those

thoughts almighty . . . superhuman.

EDITH. Good for nothing but to cause suffering. And human beings manufacture them gayly and proudly, while others profess a real fondness for them. Please, Alexander . . . you make me nervous.

BARON. Pardon me, my child. I have forgotten what you used to say.

LITVAY. It is interesting how seriously madame is wrought up at them.

BARON. She is in the habit of saying that some diabolical bond of friendship ties me to my weapons. That I have sold my soul to them.

LITVAY. Feminine ingenuity is inexhaustible, once a woman insists on being jealous of her husband.

EDITH. Not jealous.

LITVAY. I do believe that is why you are so incensed against these innocent "Britishers."

EDITH [*forcefully*]. They are not innocent.

LITVAY. Innocent because they are irresponsible. Marshal is not accountable for what it does.

BARON. You insult Marshal. Marshal thinks and acts. It is incorrect to say that it is a mere instrument. Sometimes even I am afraid of Marshal, and that is saying a great deal.

LITVAY. In that case, it deserves to be honored and respected; but I am not enough of a hunter for that. I am not afraid of Marshal.

[*This is said with some pointedness.*]

EDITH. I don't care if you laugh at me or send me away, but please drop the subject. Let us talk of something else.

BARON. I am not afraid of either man or beast. There is only one really serious adversary—an object

that suddenly behaves as if it had a will of its own.

LITVAY. I cannot fear even that. I hold that fear does not come from without. I am incapable of fear. I simply lack the faculty. It is like being color blind. [*Pointedly.*] Moreover, to some extent it depends also on how fond one happens to be of life.

BARON. This from you? Why, you are even frightened about your throat. . . .

LITVAY. My throat, yes. But not my life. I am truly an actor, of the old school, a heedless comedian. To me the tears of others are precious, but my own life is worthless. I should have been a soldier. But things are not so bad, at that. All things are the same.

BARON. What is all the same?

LITVAY. Everything. [*Looks into BARON's eyes.*] Illness, duels, misfortunes, rifle, revolver. All the same. To travel on a train is fully as hazardous as to look into the nine-millimeter barrel of Marshal.

BARON. Only six millimeters.

LITVAY. So much the better. [*Sits down.*] Only six millimeters?

BARON [*with gun in his hand*]. Yes. Why have it larger? We who hunt in the woods out here operate within short distances. . . . I belong to the party that has for its motto, "small caliber but greater certainty."

. . . Once the bullet enters the heart, it really makes no difference whether it is six millimeters or nine and a half. This system has, among others, the advantage of . . .

[*During the last part of the sentence, the BARON has pretended to be showing something about the trigger. The gun, which*

at this moment happens to be pointed toward LITVAY, goes off. EDITH emits a shriek. A very long pause.

LITVAY. Looks as if . . . Marshal is not so very dependable, after all.

BARON. It's incomprehensible.

EDITH. Good God. . . . Why, this is dreadful . . . Please . . . I hardly dare ask . . . Litvay . . . are you hurt?

BARON [*having placed the rifle on the table, approaches LITVAY, in a whisper*]. God is with you.

LITVAY. With us, you mean.

EDITH. Are you all right?

LITVAY. Quite.

EDITH. But how . . . how could this happen?

[SERVANT enters.]

BARON. What do you want?

[SERVANT stands mutely.] What do you want? I didn't ring for you.

[Enraged, glares at SERVANT, who, frightened by the withering look, exists. Meanwhile the BARON says:]

You have no right to come here until called, even if the house should collapse. [*After SERVANT exits, pause. Turns around.*] It's a serious disaster that we escaped, Litvay. We are men, but words fail me to express my thoughts on the situation I happen to be in. It might have been otherwise.

LITVAY. Please don't mention it at all. It is lucky that nothing worse has happened. Let us waste no time on what might have been. I have never been a pessimist; and I am much less than now.

BARON. You are right.

[Pause.]

LITVAY. Certainly, it would have been an odd sort of disease to die of. People think so much about the pos-

sible forms of death. But, frankly, this had never occurred to me, though it is a comparatively frequent way out.

BARON. It is the first such instance in my career.

LITVAY. It is frequent and the beauty of it—that it is not always accidental.

BARON. Precisely.

LITVAY. In the accidental cases . . . [*His voice grows feeble.*] . . . in such cases . . . of accident . . . accident . . .

EDITH. Good heavens! Litvay . . .

BARON. What's the trouble?

LITVAY. Oh, nothing . . . just a slight . . .

[*Grows silent.*]

EDITH [*is beside LITVAY, aloud*]. Litvay . . . I am afraid something has happened after all. . . . Speak! Why don't you admit it? . . . Why hide it? . . .

BARON [*to EDITH*]. Please compose yourself.

EDITH. Why don't you tell us . . . if you are hit by the bullet . . . Heavenly Father!

LITVAY. I am compelled to confess . . . madame . . . but please be calm . . . it cannot be anything serious at worst . . . I am just beginning to feel as if it had struck my shoulder . . .

EDITH. Where?

BARON. Your shoulder?

LITVAY [*to EDITH*]. Please don't excite yourself. It is up here in the left shoulder . . . probably only grazed it. I couldn't be talking to you so calmly if . . . it were anything really serious.

EDITH. We must call a . . . call a doctor immediately.

BARON. We must look at it.

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EDITH. Alexander . . . phone to Dr. Jánosy at once. [*Rings bell.*] Have the motor go to fetch him from Felvár.

[*BARON takes receiver off the hook, while SERVANT enters.*]

EDITH. Have the auto drive to Felvár immediately as fast as it can go. To the hospital, where the chauffeur is to pick up Dr. Jánosy, the medical supervisor. Hurry.

[*SERVANT exits.*]

BARON [*to telephone operator*]. Please give me Felvár-9. [*Waits.*] Thank you. This the hospital? Please connect me with Dr. Jánosy at once. Please. Yes, I'll wait. Right here at the phone.

EDITH. But meanwhile, too, perhaps we ought to . . .

LITVAY. You must not touch it at all. This is the lesson taught me on the battlefield. One must rest, and let the doctor be the first to touch the wound. I am quite certain it is nothing serious.

EDITH. Is it bleeding?

LITVAY. No. I feel nothing to make me fear that. Small wounds like this close up fast. The bullet seems to have skimmed through a muscle only. It's really nothing.

BARON [*at the telephone*]. Is this Dr. Jánosy? Baron San-Friano speaking. Good evening. My motor is on the way to fetch you. Ought to be there in a few minutes. An accident has happened . . . with a rifle. . . . No, doesn't seem to amount to much. . . . Yes, please . . . I shall appreciate it. [*Hangs up the receiver.*] He says he'll wait for the car in front of the gate. [*To LITVAY.*] And wouldn't you like to have us put you to bed?

LITVAY. Not for the world. It is

only to please madame that I consented to have the doctor examine me.

BARON. How can you be so careless? One can never tell just how serious a wound may be, even though it may not bother you much at first.

LITVAY. Please, baroness, be seated. Rest easy on my account, and let us resume our chat.

EDITH. Shall I bring you some water or cognac?

LITVAY. No, nothing, thank you.

EDITH. I was dreadfully frightened when you became silent a moment ago . . . and pale . . .

LITVAY. I am beginning to . . . to recover. I think it was the excitement rather than anything else.

BARON [*to EDITH*]. Won't you sit down, please? There's no need to disturb him any further. Perhaps you ought to have a glass of water or cognac.

EDITH [*reaches for a glass*]. Just a drop of water . . .

[*Sits down. Pause.*]

LITVAY. As I was saying . . . that's where we left off, I believe . . . these incidents are comparatively frequent and the beauty about them is the fact that they are not always accidental. And you, dear baron, agreed.

BARON. Yes, I said it is precisely so.

EDITH. I don't understand just why you think it beautiful that it is not always accidental. What is beautiful about that?

LITVAY. A gun that discharges and sends a bullet somewhere at random may be regarded as brutal and shocking. But a gun that thinks and merely shields itself by accident

—that is romantic, beautiful . . . chilling.

EDITH. How strange are the things you are saying.

LITVAY. So is the moment in which I say them.

BARON. Perhaps, though I have a feeling that the aphorism is rather out of place.

LITVAY. I shall not dispute that. But, being on the subject, one cannot help thinking of all possibilities.

BARON. Possibilities. This word is just as much out of place as your whole exposition.

LITVAY. You must excuse me if I deviate from the conventional rules of conversation. Although I do not feel ill, since a physician has been sent for, I venture to take advantage of the prerogatives of an invalid.

BARON. Which likewise are limited.

LITVAY. Which limits I shall have the pleasure not to respect.

[Pause.]

BARON. You owe yourself rest now.

LITVAY. If that refers to my condition, I am grateful. If, however, it means that the subject I am on is unpleasant, I shall consider the thing that appeals to me most—rest or talk.

BARON. You are exciting yourself.

LITVAY. On the contrary. I am trying to calm myself.

EDITH. Litvay, please . . .

LITVAY. But it is very difficult.

BARON. I shall make things easier for you. You need not veil every word you say. If it is your purpose to discuss this theme with me in such a tone of voice—why, I am at your disposal.

EDITH. I beg you both . . . why, it is painful to listen to . . .

LITVAY. Certainly not amusing, I grant you. I am being forsaken by what is known as British cold-bloodedness and I feel the impulses of the peasant rear their head.

BARON. You still cloak your words. But I shall help you overcome that. The peasant now rearing within you would like to say that not Marshal, but I, am responsible for what has transpired.

LITVAY. More than that.

BARON. More than that? I wonder what else he would like to say?

LITVAY. That Marshal had nothing to do with this whole thing.

BARON. But I alone.

LITVAY. Yes, you alone.

[Momentary pause.]

EDITH [rises]. I shan't tolerate any more of this talk. Not for another moment. I can't bear it.

BARON. You will be kind enough to remain seated and listen to what is being said here—to the end.

EDITH. I shall listen to nothing. I—

BARON. You will be kind enough to respect my orders.

[EDITH sits down. Pause.]

LITVAY. You said that, though something may cause no unpleasantness at first, it may be serious, nevertheless. Since you have said that, I have been thinking about it, too. And, since there is always the possibility of gravity, let us face one another and talk about it.

BARON. As you like. I am at your disposal.

LITVAY. A rifle may be shrewd. Even the bullet, while in flight. But once it stops, it is usually foolish.

Who knows what may be the intention of the one that is in me.

EDITH. Why . . . a while ago you said that it merely grazed your shoulder.

LITVAY. No. It is in me.

EDITH. Impossible . . . in that case. . . . Why, you ought to be doing something about it. [*Rises.*] You can't go on like this! How is it possible that you sit there calmly talking?

LITVAY. Let us not debate that. Credit me with the ability to bear pain. I am without fear, as I said before. As for my life . . . I have never regarded it as my own. It has been merely borrowed. Sooner or later, I must return it.

[*All of this is said with ebbing tone, as when one manfully seeks to conceal his suffering.*]

BARON. You suggested that we face one another.

LITVAY. Yes. And let us discuss it. Are you satisfied that it was an accident?

EDITH [*exclaims*]. Yes, an accident!

[*Draws slightly toward her husband. Pause. LITVAY gazes long at EDITH.*]

LITVAY. The baroness has answered my question.

BARON. Had I intended to fire at you . . .

LITVAY. Then we should have met at the hunt to-morrow. But I had declined to join. I dared not risk my throat. I did say, didn't I, that I fear for my throat, but not for my life? And, evidently, this is an excellent policy. Had I not feared for my throat, to-morrow I should probably have found a six-millimeter hole in my heart.

BARON. In other words, you declare rather unmistakably that I intentionally fired this bullet into you.

LITVAY. Let us assume that I do. Or let us not even assume. It is so.

EDITH. This is unfair. You can't say such a thing! . . .

BARON. You are my guest, and you are wounded. What is there for me to reply now? At the proper time I shall answer you most forcefully.

LITVAY. And should there be no one to listen to your reply?

EDITH. You can't say that it was deliberate, not at such a terrible moment. . . . You have no right to say such a thing . . .

BARON. Please do not force me into a debate in which I am necessarily fettered.

LITVAY [*excited*]. You are hereby released from all fetters . . . you need have consideration for nothing. Speak and answer me! I demand it!

BARON. By what right do you demand anything of me?

LITVAY. On the ground . . . that perhaps . . . I shall have no further opportunity . . . to debate . . . this with you. . . . Not that I desire to avenge myself now. I am merely curious. I am interested in human beings and accidents, entanglements, causes, and crimes.

BARON. Please be considerate of my considerateness.

LITVAY. Why, I am silent . . . and you, madame, need not be uneasy . . . I shall continue to be silent. But if this stupid bullet is as stupid as . . . at this moment . . . I have again to suppose . . . then my discretion can last only so long as I exist.

BARON. I have not solicited your discretion.

LITVAY. But I grant it. While I live, this thing concerns . . . the three of us. . . . It is nobody's affair. But . . . sir . . . if I . . . as guest of a refined family, where I am invited to be amused . . . should be guilty of the tactlessness of dying . . . then my silence would be of no avail. For at such times total strangers usually like to interfere. In such cases . . . one meets a very grim gentleman who comes with official-looking documents under his arm. Those that accompany him address him as "Coroner." And this gentleman is more inquisitive even than I am. And the task of quizzing is much easier for him than for me, if for no other reason than that when he questions you . . . there is no six-millimeter bullet in his body. He ascertains anything he wishes to know. And I, if I may stress the point, am such a curious person that I dread to think of not learning what that gentleman undoubtedly will. That . . .

[*Grows weaker and silent.*]

EDITH. You ought to lie down. Why, this is torture even for those who see it . . . much more so for you. Please . . . permit us to help you . . .

LITVAY. I protest. Vehemently. I want no one to touch me. We'll wait for the doctor.

BARON. You no longer cast suspicion, but openly accuse. And since you really lay no claim to consideration . . .

LITVAY. I don't.

BARON. Then you will have your reply.

LITVAY. I demand it.

BARON. Your charge is unfounded, wicked and despicable.

LITVAY. And you lie right now.

[*EDITH jumps up with a shriek.*]

BARON. Remain at ease, my dear. You ought to know that there is no situation in which I cannot control myself.

LITVAY. You lied because this shot had certain prior occurrences as its motive.

BARON. It had none.

[*Looks at EDITH.*]

LITVAY. "Once again you have lied. For in fact there were prior happenings which may be found precisely where your eyes now search for them.

EDITH. Pardon me . . . but I have given you no reason to say that. Remember, as a gentlemen, what you are saying. . . .

LITVAY [*does not even look at the woman*]. You were jealous.

BARON. Never.

LITVAY. Just this once. I am proud of it.

BARON. I must disillusion you, my dear Mr. Actor.

LITVAY. You were in the adjoining room and heard what I told your wife.

BARON. I heard nothing.

[*LITVAY looks at EDITH.*]

EDITH [*as if answering LITVAY's look*]. You . . . you had said nothing to me . . . which my husband could resent.

LITVAY. Oh, yes, I did. I confessed my love for you. And I tried to prevail on you to leave your husband and to be my wife.

BARON. You could not have said this to my wife.

EDITH. Indeed, he did not.

LITVAY [*to EDITH*]. You did not encourage it, you rejected me, but I

did say it. [*To the BARON.*] And you overheard it.

BARON. You could not possibly have said anything like it to the baroness.

EDITH. He did not. No. He did not!

LITVAY. Let us suppose . . . just let us suppose . . . that the gentleman whom a moment ago I called the Coroner . . . should ask you whether or not . . . prior to the accident . . . there had been any display of jealousy between the two of you . . . if he should ask you, what would your answer be?

EDITH. That there was not.

LITVAY. Never?

BARON. Never?

LITVAY. I beg the baroness to reply.

EDITH. Never . . . never a word. Please be careful, if you can, of what you are saying. My husband is apt to think that . . .

LITVAY. What?

EDITH. He is so chivalrous, so open and above board, so much the man. . . .

LITVAY. The honorable sir did not fetch Marshal in order to settle conveniently a crisis that . . .

EDITH [*aghast*]. No, no, no. How do you assume that? Why do you say it? [*Constantly looks at her husband.*] To impute anything like that to my husband! Why . . .

LITVAY. In other words, you, the only one who knows everything, you . . . are of the opinion that what happened here . . . was purely a deplorable accident. . . .

EDITH. Litvay . . . please collect yourself for a moment . . . you are so upset now. . . .

LITVAY. Answer my question.

BARON. Answer him.

EDITH. Yes, Litvay, it was an accident . . . I . . . er . . . after all . . . how could you fancy even for a moment that . . . why, it's dreadful . . . my husband has never . . . not even insinuated . . . what you say here is unheard of. . . . Don't look at me like that . . . I'm afraid of you!

[*Sobs as she goes to her husband.*]

BARON. Don't cry, my child. [*Tenderly embraces her.*] And don't be afraid of anything.

EDITH. In your arms . . . I'm not afraid . . . in your strong arms. . . .

[*BARON kisses her tenderly. After the kiss, a slight pause.*]

LITVAY gazes at the scene with a bitter smile. EDITH gradually disentangles herself from the BARON'S arms and for a little while stands beside him while dabbing her eyes with a kerchief; then she slowly walks to right, bent on leaving the room. As she nears the door, LITVAY rises and speaks.]

LITVAY. Just a moment, please, baroness.

[*EDITH halts.*]

LITVAY. I should have been playing at Budapest this evening. In one of my pet rôles, at that. I declined the performance in order to come here. I did not know at the time that I should be playing, after all. But I know now and may as well tell you. I have been playing all this time—in my finest rôle.

[*Laughs. EDITH returns, and steps close to him.*]

BARON. What does this mean?

LITVAY [*laughingly*]. Oh, ever so much. Indeed. How strangely the two of you look at me. You seem

to surmise what has happened here.

BARON. Surely, you were not pretending?

LITVAY. That's exactly what I was doing, sir, and quite successfully, I notice. Don't stare at me. It is just as I told you. There is not a thing the matter with me, there is no sort of a bullet in me. Your famous British rifle found no target in me. Just a little play-acting, that was all. And, though I am not a braggart, I am glad to observe that it was rather good acting, too. And certainly very instructive. [*Laughs.*] The distinguished gathering will, I hope, forgive a poor comedian this demonstration of private initiative.

BARON. Were you scoffing at me?

LITVAY. So I was, sir. But neither to annoy you nor to regale myself. Oh, no. It was serious playing. I loved your wife, dear baron, and you went to shoot me . . .

BARON. This has gone just about far enough. . . .

LITVAY. No—no—no—no! You meant to fire a bullet into me but missed. So far it was a serious matter. Then came the comedy. I am a curious fellow. Must I repeat that over again? I should have liked to have seen what might have happened had Marshal not met defeat this time. One may be forgiven for being curious about one's own funeral. That, dear madame and sir, is exactly what I have just witnessed. I have learned my lesson. It was a very wretched funeral. I died in such a miserable manner, as forsaken as the dog that is run over by the baron's motor car out on the road. . . . It keels over into the ditch, miserably, pitifully. And the automobile dashes on; the baron does not even bother to look

back. Yes, I died dreadfully, my dear audience. I should have to cry, if it were not so amusing. Please do not be angry at me for this. The thought was irresistible. Just fancy—not a common occurrence—one is slain . . . and one gets a glimpse into what happens after his death. Is it any wonder that a real actor yields to the temptation, and commits something that may not be altogether proper. It was no great joy to see that the dead man is wrong . . . how some one is eager to escape from the dead man . . . to positive life, to further living . . . to see how only life is right . . . that only what is alive, vigorous and tenacious may count on friends, partisans, witnesses . . . and everything. . . . No, it is no pleasure to observe all that; but, as I have said before, I am so curious that I am fairly ashamed of myself. If you have forgiven me, please be seated . . . [*Points them to chairs and sits down himself.*] . . . and let us talk of something else. As for the hunt, I hereby give it up definitely, for my throat is really beginning to hurt. . . . In fact, in the morning I shall return to Budapest on the same express train that brought me here. There I shall apply compresses all day . . . always provided, of course, that I have been forgiven by both of you for my boldness. In the contrary case . . .

BARON [*sternly*]. Enough of this declamation. Now I know what you were after. That's why I have listened to you.

[*Servant enters.*]

SERVANT. Doctor Jánosy.

[*Slight pause.*]

LITVAY [*rises*]. Let him in—with your kind permission.

[SERVANT *exits*. JÁNOSY, *carrying his instrument case, enters*.]

JÁNOSY. Good evening.

EDITH. Good evening, doctor. Thanks for your readiness to be of service . . . but we have a pleasant surprise for you.

BARON. Good evening. Won't you be seated, doctor?

JÁNOSY. How is that, if I may ask . . . the accident?

LITVAY. There was no accident, sir. It is my fault that you had to come here on such a cruelly cold night. Please relieve yourself of your case . . . [*Takes it from him*.] . . . and permit me to introduce myself—Imre Litvay, the actor.

JÁNOSY. That's quite superfluous, sir. . . . I have often had the pleasure of seeing you play at Budapest.

EDITH. Tea or coffee, doctor?

JÁNOSY. Nothing, thank you.

BARON. Perhaps some whisky, or wine?

JÁNOSY. Thank you, really I desire nothing. I am unaccustomed to. . . . But tell me how it happened . . . this . . . accident . . . or non-accident. . . .

LITVAY. I beg your pardon, the guilt is all mine. Please concentrate all your wrath on me. What happened briefly is this. That gun over there went off while it was being shown. It was in the hands of the baron at the moment it exploded and I, after the first scare, could not resist the opportunity of impersonation. Go on, pull my ears, doctor, but I acted as though I had really been hit by the bullet. And I played the part to a finish. When they telephoned you, I felt a pang of remorse for a moment. But by then, dear doctor, I was so deeply in it that I could

not undo it. . . . Please forgive a foolish actor this poor joke . . . give me your hand . . . which I shall regard as a silver wreath at my jubilee celebration.

[*Extends his hand*.]

JÁNOSY [*claps his hand*]. But, my dear fellow . . . there is no need at all for offering so many excuses.

LITVAY. You do forgive me?

JÁNOSY. Most gladly. Believe me that, now that I know it is you, I am doubly happy that my services are not needed.

EDITH. But you will remain a while now . . . and have a drink of some sort.

BARON. Really, I should be delighted.

JÁNOSY. I'll merely sit down for a moment, so as not to rob you of your sleep, as the superstitious might say. [*Sits down*.] I have a very serious patient up in Felvár, whom I must see several times yet to-night.

EDITH. Will you have something sweet . . . Chartreuse?

JÁNOSY. Thank you, but I do not indulge.

BARON [*offers him a box*]. A cigar?

JÁNOSY. Yes.

[*Lights a cigar*.]

LITVAY. You know . . . just picture yourself in my position. Here I sat, jovially chatting with my host, and the baron was showing me his rifles—Colonel and Marshal. . . .

JÁNOSY. I know them. I usually get Captain only. . . .

BARON. Better late than never.

LITVAY. And as he was telling me about the splendid qualities of these British-made rifles, suddenly one spoke up. . . .

JÁNOSY. Incredible.

LITVAY. Incredible, indeed. It had probably been borrowed by some one who returned it loaded. The baron is much too experienced a hunter to hang up a rifle that has not been emptied first. And so off it went. Precisely in the direction where I was sitting. I recall the frightened faces. Frankly, dear doctor . . . even though one is not an actor . . . is he not likely to feel a sudden desire to play the part of a shot victim? . . . not so much because of the jest but to observe, to watch, what the others will say, or do, how they will react.

JÁNOSY. Yes, I find it to be a most natural impulse. And you tell it so delightfully that I am actually sorry not to have been here to witness it.

LITVAY. You may well regret it, for it was highly amusing.

JÁNOSY. Amusing?

LITVAY. Well, say interesting. A socially prominent couple suddenly confronted by a situation in which they are the slayers of a human being. It is a drama fit for experts.

JÁNOSY. And I had to miss it all.

LITVAY. Just as on the stage . . . the doctor always arrives at the end.

JÁNOSY [*laughs*]. Quite right.

LITVAY. So, then, I may hope for your forgiveness?

JÁNOSY. Gladly, and with all my heart. [*To BARON and his wife.*] I can imagine how little you enjoyed it as a production. But now . . . in retrospect . . . to have seen such a difficult rôle enacted by this illustrious actor . . . it must have been a sight for the gods.

BARON. He did it amazingly well.

EDITH [*earnestly*]. Overly well. It upset me . . . and I am seriously angry at him, for . . . it will be some

time . . . before I recover from the shock.

LITVAY. Really, I am very sorry.

[*SERVANT enters at right.* BARON looks at him inquiringly.]

SERVANT. The master of the hunt is waiting for you, sir. He wants your instructions for to-morrow, sir.

BARON. Excuse me, for only a minute.

[*Exits at right, followed by SERVANT.*]

LITVAY. As an artist and psychologist, I was intrigued by the situation.

JÁNOSY. And you played the part of the dying person?

LITVAY. That is why it proved to be so interesting. And, moreover, I was curious to see what would be the reaction of the only witness . . . [*Laughs.*] . . . present at the manslaughter.

[*EDITH laughs nervously.*]

JÁNOSY. And what did she say?

LITVAY. She behaved very reassuringly. It is a joy to see a smart and fine woman in such a predicament. Are you married?

JÁNOSY. Not I.

LITVAY. Get married . . . take my advice.

JÁNOSY [*rises*]. The gratifying thing is that I found nothing to do here. You will pardon me, baroness, but I am becoming a bit uneasy about my patient. We rural physicians are so conscientious. May I hope that your auto will drive me back?

EDITH. Certainly. [*Reaches for the bell.*] We'll have it ready at once.

JÁNOSY. That will not be necessary, for I told him to wait a while in front of the gate.

EDITH. In that case, I shall not

detain you. Again, we thank you for being so accommodating.

JÁNOSY. Don't mention it. I cannot say that I came gladly, but promptly and with all good intentions. I kiss your hand.

EDITH. Just a moment. . . . I should like you to say good-bye to my husband. I'll call him. . . .

[Hurries out at right. Slight pause.]

LITVAY. Doctor . . . just one word, quick, there's no time to be lost . . . if we had not remained alone now, I would have had to wait until dawn . . . doctor . . . I ask for your professional discretion, your word of honor. . . .

JÁNOSY. But, sir, what . . .

LITVAY. You were not too late to witness my comedy. You have watched it to the finish. You are watching it now.

JÁNOSY. How is that?

LITVAY. Doctor, I . . . I can hardly stand on my feet . . . I was not playing then . . . the performance is on now . . . for the bullet is here in me . . . which that scoundrel had fired into me . . . here near the shoulder.

JÁNOSY. But then . . .

[Moves to open his case.]

LITVAY. No, no. Not here. This they must never know. Remember. I want your word.

JÁNOSY. Sir, that goes without saying. [Steps close to LITVAY.] In the shoulder, did you say?

LITVAY. Here.

[Stands with back turned to audience, pulls aside shirt.]

JÁNOSY [looks at wound.] It scarcely bled. But it is in an uncomfortable spot. Does it hurt?

LITVAY. Intensely.

[Covers the wound and adjusts the outer garment.]

JÁNOSY. You will come with me to Felvár immediately. We'll take care of it at the hospital. If you are able to stand it so admirably, there will be no complications. You are lucky.

LITVAY. Rather.

[Slight pause.]

JÁNOSY. I marvel at your fortitude.

LITVAY. They are under the impression that I acted then. Now you know, don't you—why I played the part of the wounded so well? Because I was not acting. I tried to hide it immediately, but I felt suddenly faint. I thought I would die. Indeed, it must have been an admirable sight to them. Then . . . with bitterness overflowing in me, I recovered, overcame the pain, and began to act.

JÁNOSY. Well now . . . we had better be leaving—the quicker the better. This is no longer a show fit for a doctor to watch idly.

LITVAY. Permit me to hold your hand. You are so very sympathetic to me. At last, a stranger, after so many acquaintances. [SERVANT enters at right and crosses the stage. To SERVANT.] I say . . . please pack my things at once . . . all you need to do is lock the valise. Everything is still in it . . . and carry it to the auto. I am going with the doctor to Felvár.

SERVANT. At your command, sir.

[Goes up the stairs, exits.]

JÁNOSY. As a physician, I ought not to ask this question, but you look at me with so much confidence that I venture to inquire why it is necessary now to conceal all this at the cost of so much suffering?

LITVAY. You know . . . so that they may not triumph over me. He was jealous of me. And he shot at me like at a strange dog that might stray into his garden. Well, then, . . . I'll carry the bullet with me, I'll go away . . . but he shall not have the satisfaction. Neither he nor his wife. Now do you understand?

JÁNOSY. Yes.

LITVAY. I thought this woman . . . ah, I believed a great many things. But now I have been warned by them . . . that they are conventional people.

JÁNOSY. Very proper people, indeed.

LITVAY. Had he shot me through the heart, had I passed away, it might have been better. For one who is light-hearted, an enthusiast, an actor, or a lover—that is the ideal death. Had the bullet missed me, that, too, would have been finer—to laugh at the old husband's discomfiture, and to pass on, gayly whistling. But this way . . . to slink away with a bullet that hurts . . . they must not find out. No, my dear doctor. To-night I want to have the laugh on them. For once, do not let the smart ones laugh. Once, and once only, let the poor, fickle-hearted gypsy laugh, no matter how . . . much it may hurt.

JÁNOSY. It is amazing how you stand it.

LITVAY. God has given some sort of protective weapon to every human being. The ox uses its horns, the tiger its teeth, the rabbit its fleet feet, the bird its wings, the soldier his sword—and the poor actor his comedy. There is nothing more natural than that.

[EDITH and BARON enter at right.]

BARON. I understand you are in hurry to get away, doctor.

JÁNOSY. Yes, sir, I have two patients.

BARON. You mentioned only one a while ago.

JÁNOSY. In a hospital . . . one finds many more. . . .

BARON. Well, then, permit us to thank you again . . . and . . . God be with you.

[They shake hands.]

JÁNOSY. Good day. I kiss your hand, madame.

[Kisses EDITH's hand.]

LITVAY [*jovially once more*]. The doctor has been kind enough to offer to take me along to Felvár. . . . There I will catch the morning express. At least I shan't have to get up at dawn and expose the motor to extra wear and tear. . . . I, too, want to say good-bye. . . .

[Bows.]

JÁNOSY. And I'll take my satchel and bid you good night.

[Picks up his instrument case.]

BARON. Good night.

EDITH. Good night, Dr. Jánosy.

LITVAY. *Au revoir*, sir. I kiss your hand, madame.

EDITH. So . . . you are really going?

[JÁNOSY has meanwhile gone out, the door remaining open.]

LITVAY. For me, the hunt is quite over. As a hunter, I obtained no part. But as game, I did rather well, thank God. What else is there here for me? Perhaps merely a bit of recognition, for which I might ask, as did the actors in ancient Rome who, after each performance, appealed to the audience for plaudits. One

thing you must admit—I was not so bad in the part I played.

BARON. Indeed, you did admirably.

LITVAY. And you, baroness, what have you to say?

EDITH. I am captivated. I applaud.

[*Her hands move as in applause.*]

LITVAY. And I . . . [*Laughs.*] . . .

with your permission, ask for no reward, except to be allowed to laugh heartily over the whole thing. [*Prolonged, agonized laughter.*] Good night! [*Laughs.*] Good night!

[*Hastily exits at left.* BARON, with arms folded, sternly gazes after LITVAY's retreating figure. EDITH crumples up in an arm-chair.]

CURTAIN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

T H E V I O L E T

Translated by

LOUIS RITTENBERG

Not yet produced in America

CHARACTERS

PRODUCER-MANAGER

COMPOSER

MISS ROBOZ

MISS MARKUS

MISS RAKOLNOKI

MISS THUZ

MISS SZELL

OFFICE FLUNKY

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

The action of the play takes place in the office of a producer-manager

[SCENE: *The producing-manager's office in a comedy theatre. Two windows in back, through which are visible windows of a many-storied structure across the street. There is a bookcase between the two windows. Doors left and right. Down right an upright piano. Down left a large desk. Upon it a city telephone and also a house telephone. Two arm-chairs in front of the desk and a waste-basket at right. In the center a table surrounded by many chairs, all littered with manuscript, papers and books; also two glasses on a tray. Prominently at right a heating stove. It is a sunny autumn forenoon.*

At rise of curtain MANAGER *is discovered escorting* MISS ROBOZ *to door.*]

ROBOZ. Sure you can't do anything?

MANAGER [*impatiently*]. I am very sorry, Miss. Good day!

ROBOZ. Couldn't you try?

MANAGER [*opens door*]. I'm afraid not. Good-bye.

ROBOZ. But, please—if something should turn up—

MANAGER. Can't you see how busy I am? Look at all these people waiting out there. [*Telephone rings.*] And there goes the telephone, too.

ROBOZ. Well, then, good-bye. Elvira Roboz is my name, you will not forget it, will you?

[*Exit at right.*]

MANAGER. I won't. Good day! [*Closes door behind her, then goes to telephone; standing, he picks up receiver.*] Hello!—I can't get a word. What's that? Who did you say it is? Oh, fine. This is the management of People's Theatre—oh, yes, it's the manager you are talking to. . . . It's a pleasure. [*Protracted listening.*] Oh, no, that won't do at all. You've got to come to the theatre to look at the thing. [*A*

terrific hubbub—voices of a man and a woman without.] How is that? I can't make out what you are saying. Please hold on a minute till I put a stop to that racket. Just a moment. [*Calls outside.*] John! [FLUNKY enters.] Tell them out there not to be so noisy. I can't get a word over the wire.

FLUNKY. Yes, sir.

[*Exits—noise subsides.*]

MANAGER [*into the telephone*]. Now, then, the trouble is that we can't get enough heat and pure air at the same time. If the stoker puts only a small amount of coal in the furnace, the air is clear but the place is cold. And if he uses plenty of it, why, then the whole theatre is full of fumes. . . . That's it, you've got the right idea. Just send your engineer over to see whether it is the coal or the heating apparatus that needs attention. . . . Yep . . . yep . . . no . . . no. . . . That's right. . . . Good-bye. [*Hangs up and presses a button. FLUNKY enters with two manuscripts in his hand. One has a yellow cover, the other red.*] What was that infernal racket out there a while ago?

FLUNKY. Miss Szeniczey had a run-in with the casting director.

MANAGER. Can't Miss Szeniczey find some place outside of my reception room to have it out with the casting director?

FLUNKY. She likes to have her spats here, so that you may hear them too.

MANAGER. Confound it! Haven't I enough trouble to-day? And what was the row about?

FLUNKY. Miss Szeniczey, as the star, insists on doing the clog-dance in the new operetta. But the di-

rector seems to have given the part to Miss Bán. And now Szeniczey demands that he take it away from her.

MANAGER. That'll do.

[*Fumbles through a stack of papers.*]

FLUNKY. It's her mother that puts her up to it.

MANAGER. I did not ask you!

[*Becomes engrossed in his papers. Pause.*]

FLUNKY. May I ask, sir, what's to be done with the ladies—[*Produces a list of names.*—] who are still out there?

MANAGER. Let them wait. How many more are there?

FLUNKY. Eleven.

[*Glances at the list.*]

MANAGER. That's awful. Will there ever be an end to them? So far I have given the gate to five.

FLUNKY. Why, that's easy. I'll send them all home and you won't need to bother with them.

MANAGER. That's a bright idea. Nix. You know right well I am still in need of eight or ten good chorus girls. No, I am afraid I'll have to make the best of it.

FLUNKY. Can I send in the next one?

MANAGER. Wait a minute. I want to make a call first. [*Picks up receiver of house telephone.*] Is that the casting director? . . . Who is it? . . . Please give me the casting director. Yes, I'll wait! . . . [*Pause, during which he holds receiver to his ear. To the FLUNKY.*] What's that yellow pamphlet in your hand?

FLUNKY. It's the manuscript of Mr. Lovay's new play. He asks you to read it very carefully, as you promised to. [*Extends manuscript.*

MANAGER *holds phone to left ear and with right hand points to the stove.*
 FLUNKY *opens door of stove.*] In there?

[MANAGER *nods his head in the affirmative.* FLUNKY *flings yellow script into fire.*]

MANAGER [*receiver is still at his ear*]. And what's that red tablet?

FLUNKY. This is another copy of *that*, in case you happen to throw the first one into the fire.

MANAGER. That's the way to talk. I like resourceful people. Let's have it. [*Takes red-covered script from FLUNKY and places it on desk.*] I am going to read it. [*Into the telephone.*] Hello! Is that the casting director? . . . Hello! . . . What's this I hear again about that Szeniczey woman? . . . Oh, yes . . . yes . . . of course. . . . Yep. . . . Not a chance in the world! . . . Quite right. . . . I should say not. . . . You did the right thing. . . . So long!

[*Hangs up.*]

FLUNKY. Can I let one in now?

MANAGER. Go ahead. Don't ask so many questions!

FLUNKY [*at door looks at his list*]. Miss Markus is next!

[*Exits.*]

MARKUS [*enters*]. How do you do. Markus is my name!

MANAGER. You mean Emilia? *

MARKUS. Oh, no. Just plain Tony Markus.

MANAGER. Too bad. What do you wish?

MARKUS. You, dear Mr. Manager!

MANAGER. Don't you get gay with me, young one. This is no amusement park! That's where you come from, judging by your entrée.

MARKUS. Nothing but.

MANAGER. What can I do for you?

MARKUS. You may guess. I want to be in a show that plays inside a stone house.

MANAGER. Ours is made of concrete.

MARKUS. It'll suit me, dearie, so long as it isn't made out of wood.

MANAGER. In that case ours *is* wooden.

MARKUS [*coily droops her eyes*]. But *you* don't look to be made out of wood.

MANAGER. Here, here! You can't talk to me in that tone of voice!

MARKUS. Well, we are Bohemians—or aren't we?

MANAGER. I am no Bohemian. The very idea! But tell me, girlie, what were you before you became so Bohemian?

MARKUS. I was a fiancée.

MANAGER. Whose?

MARKUS. He jilted me.

MANAGER. It's plausible enough.

MARKUS. We were engaged for six years.

MANAGER. And after that?

MARKUS. I went to work in a shop.

MANAGER. Millinery?

MARKUS. No, drugs. That's where I was discovered. [*Starts unwinding a long yarn.*] You see it was like this. . . .

MANAGER. Very good, my child. Congratulations. I am glad you were discovered but haven't any time to listen to details. Do you want to join the chorus?

MARKUS. Out in the park I created big rôles.

MANAGER. Such as, for instance?

MARKUS. Carmen!

MANAGER. The opera?

* Emilia Markus is one of Hungary's foremost dramatic actresses.

MARKUS. Yes, a condensed version, but with the original music.

MANAGER. Very sensible. Anyway, I am sorry, we don't go in for that.

[*Rises to indicate his haste.*]

MARKUS. Oh, yes, I know that, dearie, but that isn't what I am really after. A minor part will do. I'd love to have you see me act. I used to be with poor old Sziklay but now I am at the Artists' Guild Theatre. I play there till Monday.

MANAGER. Sorry, but I couldn't possibly make it before Tuesday.

MARKUS. In that case, I'll get an extension.

MANAGER. You needn't do so on my account. And now, I am really very busy. There isn't a part to be had. But I can use a few more chorus girls.

MARKUS [*mournfully*]. Chorus girl?

MANAGER. What did you think I was engaging—ladies-in-waiting?

MARKUS. No, no . . . but it's dreadful to be in the chorus after one has played Eva.

MANAGER. Eva?

MARKUS. Yes, Eva in "The Tragedy of Man."*

MANAGER. Was that condensed, too?

MARKUS. Indeed. We did it all in one act but with the original music.

MANAGER. That's comforting.

MARKUS. Why, it would be a downright shame to have to start in the chorus all over again.

MANAGER. Alas, such is life. [*Looks at his watch.*] Great Scott, half-past eleven already!

MARKUS. Oh, darling Mr. Manager, couldn't you possibly give me something outside the chorus?

MANAGER. No, only inside.

MARKUS. That is awful! Am I never going to get a real part?

MANAGER. What about Carmen? And Eva?

MARKUS. That was in a wooden shack!

MANAGER. What has your art to do with building materials?

MARKUS. Frankly, I'd be willing to enter your chorus—but only on one condition.

MANAGER. And what may that be?

MARKUS. That you promise to keep an eye on me!

MANAGER. Just how do you mean that?

MARKUS [*with a coy look*]. Just the way you do.

MANAGER. Now, my dear, start going home like a good little girl.

MARKUS. Are you sending me away?

MANAGER. Exactly that.

MARKUS. You have called me "girlie" and "dear"—yet you are virtually throwing me out!

MANAGER. Yes, my little girl.

MARKUS. But why?

MANAGER. Because I won't have anybody dictate to me. Go on home, little sweetheart. Back to the park. Aren't you ashamed to offer yourself to me in that manner?

MARKUS. But please. . . .

MANAGER. Don't please me. . . . You are too fresh. Go right home!

MARKUS. Goodness me, I didn't know you were so prudish.

MANAGER. Never mind how prud-

* "The Tragedy of Man" is a sort of a "Back to Methuselah" in miniature, a gorgeous spectacle, *without music*.

ish I am. Hurry now, on your way.

MARKUS. Yes, sir. Good-bye, sir!

MANAGER. God be with you.

[MARKUS exits at right and bumps into FLUNKY on threshold.]

FLUNKY [enters]. The composer is out there to see you, sir!

MANAGER. Show him in.

FLUNKY [calling through the door]. Come right in.

[COMPOSER enters while FLUNKY exits.]

MANAGER. Welcome, my dear professor!

COMPOSER. How do you do, sir. I merely dropped in for a smoke before I go home. Hope I am not intruding. There is nothing on my mind, for a change. Our rehearsal came off splendidly, the orchestra did admirably. It makes me very happy.

MANAGER. I am glad to hear that.

[Offers him a cigarette.]

COMPOSER. Thanks. [Lights the cigarette.] The orchestra is quite through with its work; now the lines are being rehearsed but I can't sit and listen to that. I don't know whether other composers feel the same way about this, but it makes me nervous if I can't continually hear my own music from the stage.

MANAGER. Won't you have a seat?

COMPOSER. You seem out of sorts.

MANAGER. Is it any wonder? Why, it's simply galling. Did you see those women out there?

COMPOSER. I did.

MANAGER. Six I threw out this morning and there are ten more left. They are all applicants. It's the beginning of the season, you know. This is the time when they seem to be sprouting right out of the earth. They all want to be actresses.

COMPOSER. And does that irritate you?

MANAGER. Not at all. I am angry because every one of them prefers to fall on my neck.

COMPOSER. Why, that's lovely.

MANAGER. The devil it is! I don't need their loving! Take it from me, it is not the actresses that are bad but the women that want to get on the stage. They're under the impression that the success of this profession hinges on love.

COMPOSER. How very amusing!

MANAGER. Oh, yes, to you! I almost burst with exasperation. This game is new to you. It is your first operetta.

COMPOSER. But how can any one be so angry with such pretty women?

MANAGER. The prettier they are, the worse it is for me. Oh, if I could only do without chorus girls! You'd see some fast flying.

COMPOSER. It is remarkable how calloused you men of the theatre become. To me everything here is new and amazingly novel, beautiful, interesting and thrilling.

MANAGER. These are theatrical honeymoon days for all ambitious composers of chamber music!

COMPOSER. And the women, my dear sir! Think of all this feminine loveliness, congeniality and vivacity on the stage! And what a lot of dainty ones there are among them!

MANAGER. Are you married?

COMPOSER. Oh, yes. Been married for some time.

MANAGER. That's evident!

COMPOSER. Oh, well, that's another matter. My wife is a very serious-minded and saintly woman. Two years older than I am. That is the serious side of life. But this

is a delightful, care-free world. My pulse always beats faster here than at home. [*Shows pulse.*] Even those out there in the waiting-room—all in a row like birds perched on the limb of a tree—hopeful. There, there . . . don't be harsh with them.

MANAGER. It's simply maddening, I tell you—those birds all want to fall on my neck. And they are bolder this year than ever before. I don't know what has come over them. . . .

COMPOSER. You astonish me! A moralist on the throne of a sheik.

MANAGER. Oh, no, I am no moralist. Just an ordinary respectable man with a sense of good taste. I don't want this sort of love. I detest it. [*FLUNKY enters.*] Well, what is it?

FLUNKY. Miss Szeniczey refuses to play the part given her. She has returned the manuscript. Here it is.

[*Hands it to the MANAGER.*]

COMPOSER [*jumps to his feet in alarm*]. How is that? The prima-donna has returned the leading part?

MANAGER. Compose yourself, please. [*Takes the manuscript from the FLUNKY.*] Tell her it's quite all right. I am satisfied.

COMPOSER. But I beg of you! This concerns the leading lady of my operetta! Without Szeniczey we are ruined!

MANAGER. Keep cool, my dear professor. [*To FLUNKY.*] Just you tell her that everything is all right. And watch now, I am placing the manuscript under this lamp. [*FLUNKY exits.*] It really isn't worth wasting words over. You may feel quite at ease about it.

COMPOSER. But what if she really turns down the part?

MANAGER. She will not. Just you sit pretty. Where did we leave off?—

I was saying that I am no moralist, but I can't bear to see such a poor girl offering herself to me for the sake of her bread and butter.

COMPOSER [*amused*]. Offering herself to you?

MANAGER. Yes, to me. But you are not even listening. What's the matter?

COMPOSER. Pardon me but this Szeniczey affair has me all upset.

MANAGER. I told you to leave that to me.

COMPOSER. But without her we are done for.

MANAGER. Just you leave Szeniczey to me. What were we talking about? Oh, yes, I was saying that I am not a moralist. Just why I am not has been fully explained by Dumas Jr. in his memoirs. . . .

FLUNKY [*enters and says calmly*]. Miss Szeniczey has taken a revolver out of her bag and threatens to shoot the manager first, then herself—

MANAGER [*calmly continuing, as though nothing had been said by the FLUNKY*]. As I said before, Dumas Jr. says in his memoirs that the theatre itself is an immoral place. I am not trying to preach any special morals here but I am a gentleman who spurns such wretched love. Do I make myself clear?

COMPOSER. Quite.

MANAGER [*to the FLUNKY*]. What are you standing there for?

FLUNKY [*glancing at the list*]. May I let the next one in?

MANAGER [*ruffled*]. All right, let her come in.

COMPOSER. You say that as if you were losing a tooth.

MANAGER. That's just the way I feel. This one will be the seventh to-day.

COMPOSER [*rises*]. Perhaps I had better go?

MANAGER. Not at all. Stay where you are. They may be more modest in the presence of another person. [*To the FLUNKY.*] Now, then, send one in.

FLUNKY [*going to the door, reads from the list*]. Miss Rakolnoki.

RAKOLNOKI [*enters*]. How do you do!

MANAGER. How do *you* do?

RAKOLNOKI. Have I the honor to be speaking to the manager?

MANAGER. You have.

RAKOLNOKI. My name is Louise Rakolnoki.

MANAGER. Delighted. Have a seat and tell me what I can do for you.

RAKOLNOKI. I would like to get on the stage.

MANAGER. Can you sing?

RAKOLNOKI. I took a course at a singing school.

MANAGER. Have you been on the stage before?

RAKOLNOKI. Only as an amateur.

MANAGER. Where?

RAKOLNOKI. In the Public Welfare Institute down in the Fifth Ward.

MANAGER. That's pretty good experience. Are you single?

RAKOLNOKI. Yes—but I have been married.

MANAGER. Divorced?

RAKOLNOKI. Of course.

MANAGER. What was your husband?

RAKOLNOKI. He was captain on a steamboat.

MANAGER. On the sea?

RAKOLNOKI. Oh, no. Only river navigation.

MANAGER. On the Danube, I suppose?

RAKOLNOKI. Yes, sir, but he used to travel all the way down to the sea.

MANAGER. Was it a passenger boat?

RAKOLNOKI. No, sir, a freighter!

MANAGER. I see. Long voyages and all that. The captain used to stay away for long periods of time!

RAKOLNOKI. Yes, sir, while I had my voice trained and took dancing lessons.

MANAGER. All day long?

RAKOLNOKI. Continually. Now I sometimes regret it.

MANAGER. That you took those courses?

RAKOLNOKI. No—I am sorry that I divorced him. They say the Danube offers a splendid future.

[*A brief pause.*]

MANAGER. And now . . .

RAKOLNOKI. And now I would love to start on a stage career.

MANAGER. Do you think you could live on the little you'd be earning here?

RAKOLNOKI. I am not particular about that end of it.

MANAGER. Ah, then, I take it that you are a person of means?

RAKOLNOKI [*cooly*]. I have a friend.

MANAGER. On the stock exchange, I suppose?

RAKOLNOKI. Heaven forbid! An elderly and dependable merchant.

MANAGER. Grain?

RAKOLNOKI. No. Exports.

MANAGER. Aha! I see! He exports by boat.

RAKOLNOKI. Yes, mostly, but also by rail.

MANAGER. I see. [*A slight pause ensues, during which Miss RAKOL-*

NOKI *wipes a few tears from her eyes.* There, there, let's not become sentimental. I don't like that. Nor have I time for it.

RAKOLNOKI. You are right. And it's embarrassing, too, to confess these things. But if you knew what I had to go through, you wouldn't blame me. My husband had left me in a miserable state. [*Crying.*] I was on the point of going to the telephone.

MANAGER. You mean to ring somebody?

RAKOLNOKI. Oh, no, to be an operator.

MANAGER. That would have been dreadful!

RAKOLNOKI. As I was saying, my friend took care of the vocal and dancing lessons.

MANAGER. While you were married, you mean?

RAKOLNOKI. Certainly!

MANAGER. In other words . . . he began making early shipments.

RAKOLNOKI [*stupidly*]. Oh, yes, always.

MANAGER. By boat.

RAKOLNOKI [*stupidly*]. Mostly!

[*Out of her bag she draws forth a batch of clippings strung together.*]

MANAGER. What's that?

RAKOLNOKI. Critical comments on my benefit recital.

MANAGER. Thanks, I won't need them.

RAKOLNOKI. Oh, you must not think that I clipped them. My friend collected them so carefully—he did not overlook a single one of the papers. He is a blessed old soul. So innocent and unspoiled.

MANAGER [*to the composer*]. Have you ever seen an unspoiled exporter?

COMPOSER. No.

RAKOLNOKI. Oh, he really is that, and very unselfish, too. He is not interested in anything but me! His one aim is to see me satisfied and reaching my goal. He wants me to become a famous star. If I get on the stage, he will buy me the most gorgeous dresses and will do everything in his power to advance my career! And he does all this out of sheer kindness. He is like a big, overgrown child.

MANAGER. Is he stout?

RAKOLNOKI. Extremely so. Heavens! You don't happen to know him?

MANAGER. Not I. But everything you have said about him sounds so fat.

RAKOLNOKI. He *is* very fat. He has been to a specialist about it, too. But he has such a babyish face.

MANAGER. That's something.

RAKOLNOKI. And he is the soul of kindness. There are times when I don't see him for weeks. [*Looks at the MANAGER suggestively.*] I lead a very independent life, you know.

MANAGER [*embarrassed*]. There is nothing nicer than that.

RAKOLNOKI. And I shall go on being independent, especially if I get on the stage.

MANAGER [*increasingly embarrassed*]. Oh, yes, especially so. Of course.

RAKOLNOKI. He knows that I am bound to him only by ties of gratitude. And he never asks for anything else. He realizes that because of his very figure he cannot expect other illusions. All he does is respect me, and he admires my—[*Casts another suggestive look at the MANAGER.*—my grateful nature. That's my *one* grand passion: grati-

tude. Or rather two: the theatre and gratitude.

MANAGER [*still embarrassed*]. The two together are really lovely.

RAKOLNOKI [*somewhat coquettishly*]. Do you think so?

MANAGER [*angrily*]. No, I don't.

RAKOLNOKI [*quite flirtatiously*]. You only say so.

MANAGER [*with increasing fury*]. No, I don't even say so.

RAKOLNOKI. What suggestive eyes you've got.

[*Bites her lips sensuously.*]

MANAGER. Good-bye. [*A slight pause. RAKOLNOKI glances back at the composer.*] What are you looking at?

RAKOLNOKI [*smiles, confused*]. I thought I heard you say good-bye to some one.

MANAGER. So I did.

RAKOLNOKI. How so? To whom?

MANAGER. You.

RAKOLNOKI. Am I leaving?

MANAGER. I hope so.

RAKOLNOKI [*confused*]. I don't understand. Why, you haven't even tried me out—

MANAGER. Oh, yes I have. The pleasure was all mine. Good day.

RAKOLNOKI. You mean—that I am to depart?

MANAGER. No, I mean that you may go.

RAKOLNOKI. Oh—Oh!

[*Exits, shocked.*]

MANAGER [*all wrought up, slams door behind her*]. Well, if that wasn't the limit! Did you hear it? *She* is grateful and *I* have suggestive eyes. Why, it's maddening!

COMPOSER. You were slightly severe with her.

MANAGER. Did you see the fat

looks she gave me? They've gone daffy this year.

COMPOSER. But you were rude to her.

MANAGER. If I had not been, she would surely have fallen all over me right in your presence.

COMPOSER. But I can't see anything wrong in that.

MANAGER [*incensed*]. There isn't, eh? If I had allowed her to embrace me, I would have had to put up with her, too. She would have stuck to me like glue. That's why, I say, I am no moralist, but a plain—

FLUNKY [*enters announcing calmly*]. Miss Szeniczey has poisoned herself; she fell in a heap and fainted.

MANAGER [*unperturbed, continues*]. I am not a moralist, but I do want to live a wholesome and discriminating life for the good of my profession. After all, this is just as dry and serious a profession as any other, provided one takes it as seriously as I do.

FLUNKY. Shall I send in the next one?

MANAGER. Yes!

FLUNKY [*calls*]. Miss Thuz.

[*Exits.*]

COMPOSER. If they are so annoying, why don't you have your secretary deal with them?

MANAGER. They refuse, and insist on seeing the manager in person.

THUZ [*enters*]. Good morning, sir.

MANAGER [*nervously*]. The same to you. I am the manager. I suppose you, too, would like to be signed up by the theatre? What's your name?

THUZ. Jeanne Thuz.

MANAGER. Jeanne Thuz, have you a voice? [*Thuz fumbles in her bag*

for papers. MANAGER *with growing nervousness.*] Never mind that. Can you sing?

THUZ. That is what I wanted to prove to you. I meant to show you my teacher's diploma.

MANAGER. Oh, that's different. [*Takes the paper from her.*] A pedagogic course in the Metropolitan Conservatory. Why, this is a splendid diploma! Why don't you teach music? It may not mean much of an income but it surely can't be worse than what you would have to start with here— Or are you so very anxious to get on the stage?

THUZ. That, too, but I have come here chiefly because I am disgusted with pedagogy.

MANAGER. Is it possible—at such early age?

THUZ. That is characteristic of the teaching profession. Men grow tired of it when they become old, while women find it boring at the very start.

MANAGER. How old are you?

THUZ. Twenty-one.

MANAGER. Where have you taught?

THUZ. Nowhere, sir.

MANAGER. And yet you are disgusted with it?

THUZ. I should rather say, I am terrified.

MANAGER. Not by the children, surely?

THUZ. Oh, no, by the directors.

MANAGER [*joyously*]. Bravo! [*Bel-lowing.*] Bravo! [*Offers her a chair.*] Have a seat, please.

THUZ. Thank you.

[*Sits down.*]

MANAGER. There, now, that's what I like. A thoroughly earnest and re-

spectable creature. These are rare birds at this time of the year.

THUZ. Sir, I want you to know that I am respectable in the summer, too.

MANAGER. I am not interested: that's our slack season. And what did some of those directors do to you?

THUZ. There was only one but that one impression was enough for the rest of my life.

MANAGER. Splendid! And what did that scoundrel do?

THUZ. Goodness me, what didn't he do!

MANAGER. I suppose he made you a proposition.

THUZ. Indeed he did, after being in his presence less than five minutes.

MANAGER. Where did all this happen?

THUZ. In a private music school.

MANAGER. Outrageous! What school was it?

THUZ. We had better say no more about that. I don't even want to remember it. But oh, if you knew what a reputable school it is!

MANAGER. I hope you didn't spare him physically.

THUZ. You don't think I would soil my hands with a mere director, do you?

MANAGER. Bravo! Splendid!

THUZ. I simply gave him a piece of my mind. But you mustn't think that I was rude—or anything like that. . . . [*Abashed.*] . . . I come from a very good family. My folks have seen better days, and though we are poor now, I have not lost my pride and refinement. . . . [*Tearfully.*] I have to look after my poor dear mother and little brother, who is in the military academy. . . . I face life

all alone but despite all adversity, I have never yet forgotten that I am a lady. [*Rises.*] But I don't wish to bore you with any more of this; I can see that you are very busy—there are many others waiting outside. . . .

MANAGER. That makes no difference. The important question is: can you sing? And can you dance?

THUZ. I can do the ball-room dances— [*Sadly.*] Those I used to do in our palmy days.

MANAGER. Were you a good dancer?

THUZ. Well, I knew all the movements of the czardas. People often said that I dance with abandon. [*Looks about.*] May I—could I have a word with you—alone?

COMPOSER. Well, then, I'll retire to the alcove.

[*Goes to the window.*]

THUZ [*in an undertone*]. I am afraid I said something very stupid a while ago.

MANAGER. What do you mean?

THUZ. About the directors.

MANAGER [*nervously*]. Oh, no, not at all.

THUZ. Oh, but I noticed that it rankled you.

MANAGER. On the contrary!

THUZ. No, no. You were sarcastic.

MANAGER. I, sarcastic? [*Huffily.*] The idea. . . .

THUZ. Please forgive me. I had in mind *school* directors.

MANAGER. What of it?

THUZ. Well, theatrical directors and managers are not like that. There is a great difference.

MANAGER [*still peeved*]. A vast difference?

THUZ. Oh, yes, oceans, worlds of difference.

[*Droops her eyes.*]

MANAGER [*peevishly*]. Worlds, eh?

THUZ. I didn't come to the theatre in order to wither away. That I could do working for the government. Once I am here, I want to be relieved of all pressure.

MANAGER. What sort of pressure are you talking about?

THUZ. I mean the family tradition and the past! . . . I haven't even given you my right name. A new name! A new career! A new life! Fame, splendor and success are the things I crave. Yes, sir, I want to plunge into this thing with heart and soul.

MANAGER [*incensed*]. What's that you want to plunge into?

THUZ. The theatre, of course. And I would love to have you. . . .

[*Coyly.*]

MANAGER. What about me?

THUZ. I'd love to have you pave the way. . . .

MANAGER [*to the COMPOSER*]. Professor!

COMPOSER. Sir?

MANAGER. You may come back. We are through. . . . [*COMPOSER resumes his seat.*] No, Miss, I am paving no roads for anything or any one.

THUZ. And I so wanted to . . .

MANAGER. It can't be done. I am terrified, too.

THUZ [*with an air of resignation*]. Just as you say.

MANAGER. Take a tip from me and plunge into the government or into the municipality. There are worse things one could do.

THUZ. May I—[*Lowering her voice.*]—may I ask you one thing

more—I mean—can I rely upon your discretion . . . as a gentleman?

MANAGER. You have my word.

THUZ. You don't know my real name, anyway, so please take it as if I had not been here at all.

MANAGER. That's the way I have been looking at it for some minutes.

THUZ [*greatly embarrassed*]. Good night!

MANAGER. It's only noon now.

THUZ. I beg your pardon. Good day, sir.

[*Exits, greatly flustered.*]

MANAGER. It's been a pleasure to meet you. [*To COMPOSER.*] There you are!

COMPOSER. And she did seem to be starting right.

MANAGER. She evidently changed her mind. Honestly, it's beginning to send chills down my spine. I have not known a season to begin so badly in years.

COMPOSER. I can't help thinking that you frightened her with your rigidity.

MANAGER. Nonsense. They have either gone looney this year or somebody has been kidding them about my being a woman-eater. Competition in our line . . .

FLUNKY [*enters, announcing with customary coolness*]. The ambulance has taken Miss Szeniczey away.

MANAGER [*continues, unperturbed*]. There is no chivalry at all in our field. Most likely it is some rival who spreads this rumor about me, just because he knows that I am apt to lose my temper. [*To FLUNKY.*] Just you wait a while. She'll be phoning next that she died but you needn't come in to tell me that. Wait till she comes back to life and returns from the hospital in a taxi to

claim her part. Here it is under the lamp.

FLUNKY. I know, sir . . . can I send this next one in?

MANAGER. I don't care much now if a dozen more come. They're all alike. It reminds you of Monte Carlo when you lay your bets on black, and thirty times in succession red is the winner.

FLUNKY [*calls*]. Miss Szell!

SZELL [*affectionately even before she is fully inside the office*]. Hello, dearest! Darling! My Sheik!

MANAGER [*jumps up, shouting*]. Ha-ha! Yours is the voice I've been looking for! Out! Get out!

SZELL. What's this, sweetheart?

MANAGER. Beat it!

[*Pushes her toward door.*]

SZELL. What's the trouble? Are you in bad humor?

MANAGER. You said it!

SZELL. Ta, ta, old dear! I'll call again.

[*Makes for door.*]

MANAGER. Go on, waste no time! Beat it quick!

SZELL. So long! Oh, how charming!

[*Exits.*]

MANAGER [*slams door*]. Enough! I can't stand any more of this! I've never had such tough luck as this. I think I'll quit the profession. It's too much for me. These things may have been all right while I was young. But not any more. . . .

[*Strides up and down, enraged.*]

FLUNKY [*enters with his list*]. Can I . . .

MANAGER. No, you cannot! Not another of those pests! Let them all go home! Tell them all to go to—

[*Checks himself.*]

COMPOSER. Why lose your temper over it?

MANAGER. Lord! Can't you see what it is doing to me? How I am being tormented? Why, this isn't fit for a human being!

[FLUNKY *hands him a glass of water, as he collapses into a chair.*]

COMPOSER. Excuse me, but I think I know now where the trouble comes in.

MANAGER. Bless you. That does sound interesting.

COMPOSER. You no longer realize how nervous, impatient and rude you are with them. All of which is bound to be circulated, so that the poor things get the idea that a disagreeable disposition like yours has to be handled by the strongest weapon. I believe that—

MANAGER [*impatiently*]. What do you believe now?

COMPOSER. That if you treated them coolly but courteously, you'd inspire more confidence in them. . . . It's all a question of manners. . . .

MANAGER. The devil it is. All that matters is that I am a manager.

COMPOSER. If I were in your place, I would not be sarcastic with them, but calm and polite. Then it would never occur to them to try bribery.

MANAGER. I tell you what. If you really think you'd know how to manage them, I'll let you take my place here; you can act as manager a while. I'll let you have the honor. But you'll learn soon enough that it doesn't make a bit of difference here how one talks to them. Go on, take my seat.

COMPOSER. You mean that I am to act your part?

MANAGER. Exactly. [*To FLUNKY.*] How many more on the list?

FLUNKY. Six.

MANAGER [*to COMPOSER*]. You interview these six. See what you can do with them.

COMPOSER. And what will you be doing?

MANAGER. I'll take a rest. I am going to sit at that desk over there and watch how they fall on *your* neck.

COMPOSER. That's a go. In fact I am beginning to like the idea. Are you in earnest?

MANAGER. And how! [*Removes his coat.*] I am going to sit at old man Skulteti's desk. What's more, I'll put on his shabby office coat and a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, just like this. [*Slips into an old Prince Albert coat, which does not fit him.*] Here is a pair of sleeve holders, too. Now, then, remember, I am old Skulteti, half clerk and half flunky, and you are the manager. [*To FLUNKY.*] Well, John, what do you think of it?

FLUNKY. I think it's wicked.

MANAGER. John does not like the idea. But we won't mind that. I am really curious to see your method in operation. Here is your chance!

COMPOSER [*enthusiastically*]. I'll show you. Just as a clever woman can outwit any number of would-be intruders, just so can a clever man, if he keeps his wits about him.

MANAGER. That will do of theory; now let's see it in practice. Take your seat now. But, I must name one condition. If the woman begins *getting* mushy, you are to throw her right out—because that is more than I can stand.

COMPOSER. Certainly. There is

an art in anticipating just such a move!

MANAGER. That's just it. You'll find it to be that, too! But don't you dare to become sentimental. . . .

COMPOSER. God forbid! You have no idea how I fear my wife. But if the girl does not fall on my neck, it is understood that I may engage her, eh?

MANAGER. Of course!

COMPOSER [*resolutely*]. Let's go!

[*Sits in MANAGER'S chair.*]

FLUNKY. Can I send one in?

MANAGER. Wait. [*Carries outside telephone to the other desk.*] There, in case it should ring, I can answer it. [*Sits down, angrily.*] Now you can demonstrate what a psychologist you are. But remember—the minute she starts getting familiar, you are to throw her out and call the next one.

COMPOSER. Exactly. You, on the other hand, are not to breathe a word of this to my wife.

MANAGER. What do you take me for?

FLUNKY. Ready?

COMPOSER. Which one is next?

FLUNKY [*reads from his list*]. Helena Stobri.*

MANAGER. What an impressive name!

COMPOSER. Let her come.

[*FLUNKY walks over to the window and lowers the shade.*]

MANAGER. What are you doing?

FLUNKY. Well, didn't the gentleman over there say that he wants to talk to them courteously. . . .

MANAGER. Put that back up, immediately!

[*FLUNKY rolls up the shade.*]

MANAGER [*to COMPOSER*]. Did

you see that? . . . He knows this crowd.

COMPOSER [*to FLUNKY*]. All right, now, send her in.

FLUNKY [*exits, then calls outside*]. Miss Stobri!

COMPOSER [*to MANAGER*]. But you must stop being ill-tempered from now on.

MANAGER. I agree with you. But isn't it a shame that I have to hide from them in this manner?

HELENA [*enters; manager is apparently busy examining a stack of papers*]. How do you do, sir.

[*Advances toward the COMPOSER.*]

COMPOSER. Good afternoon, Miss. Won't you be seated? How can I be of service to you?

HELENA. What a sweet man. And they said you never ask any one to sit down.

COMPOSER. That's downright slander, my dear. Have a seat.

HELENA. Thank you, sir.

COMPOSER. Have you been waiting long?

HELENA. Indeed I have. Warming the bench out there since early morning.

COMPOSER. And how do I merit this honor?

HELENA. What a darling talker. And they said you are as rough as a trooper.

MANAGER [*impatiently*]. Just you answer the gentleman's questions. There is no time for discourses on beauty.

COMPOSER. Don't interrupt us, Skulteti. Mind your own affairs.

MANAGER [*dumbfounded*]. What—what—?

COMPOSER. Do your work. [*To*

* The name of a notorious road-agent of the nineteenth century.

HELENA.] Sit down, Miss, you needn't be afraid to tell me what brought you here.

HELENA [*sits down*]. What could have brought me to you, sir? I come from Stelmetz and am an actress. I should love to be on the stage.

COMPOSER. That's rather vague, Miss. Do you mind telling me what has been your speciality?

HELENA. Operettas.

COMPOSER. Operettas— Oh, yes, that's too general. What I want to know is what types did you create? Did you sing? Were you a soubrette?

HELENA. Suppose we say sub-soubrette.

COMPOSER. And what may that be? It sounds interesting but just what do you mean by that?

HELENA. Well, sir, it was really in the chorus that I shined.

MANAGER. At last, we have it.

HELENA. Who is that?

COMPOSER. Don't mind him. [*To MANAGER.*] Skulteti, you refrain from making further remarks; that's the second time you've interrupted. You know I don't like it.

MANAGER. Oh, pardon me. I promise to be quiet from now on.

HELENA. That's proper.

[*MANAGER rises, casting vicious glances at HELENA.*]

HELENA [*returning his looks*]. I mean it.

[*MANAGER sits down again.*]

COMPOSER. Continue, please.

HELENA. What a charming, encouraging man. I would love to kiss your hand.

COMPOSER. So you are in the chorus?

HELENA. Yes, sir. But I sort of outshine, at times.

COMPOSER. You outshine?

HELENA. That's what we call it down in Stelmetz. Every once in a while I used to get a wee bit of a part, an extra word or two, you know, something sensational. Anyway, I sang a lot together with the rest of the bunch, but sometimes I could not help outshining them.

COMPOSER. You mean you played minor parts.

HELENA. Quite right, sir.

COMPOSER. Aren't you with the Stelmetz company any longer?

HELENA. No, sir.

COMPOSER. And what, if I may ask, were you before you went on the stage?

HELENA. I was a state child.

COMPOSER. You mean in an orphan asylum?

HELENA. Yes, sir.

COMPOSER. And how did you get on the stage from there?

HELENA. You see it was like this. The theatre was directly opposite the orphans' home and every time they needed angels for some spectacular play, they got them out of the asylum. They used to pick me in every case because, they said, I had a wistful yet impudent face. Then, on the stage, the prompter fell in love with me because we always sang right in front of his hole. One day he whispered up to me to be his wife, but I flapped one of my wings as much as to say "no." Then he whispered up again that he didn't mind, so long as I'd consent to be his daughter because all he really wanted was some one to keep him from dying of loneliness. He said he would gladly adopt me. I motioned back to him that we could talk about such arrangement. You see, I took pity on

the poor old man who lived in such a dark and dreary hole. Soon afterwards he adopted me. That's where I got the name Stobri, sir.

COMPOSER. Please don't keep sirring me. I am not a priest.

HELENA. I can see that, sir.

COMPOSER. Well, then, why do you say it?

HELENA. It's just a mild force of habit. It was a custom in our company. We used to say it to such sweet men as editors, mayors, chief medical examiners, fur dealers and so on.

COMPOSER. How about composers?

HELENA. Never, sir. They are such a scary, jumpy lot of people.

COMPOSER. How about directors and managers?

HELENA. Not very often.

COMPOSER. That's quite all right.

HELENA [*alarmed*]. I beg your pardon. Have I offended you?

COMPOSER. Oh, not at all. How could you—you, such a lovely charming creature?

HELENA. Thank you. [*Smiles bewitchingly*]. You are wonderfully sympathetic.

MANAGER [*venomously*]. Out she goes. Out!

[*Burrows through his papers.*]

HELENA. What was that, sir?

MANAGER. Oh, nothing. I am just looking at this score. [*Turns the pages.*] Throw out the angel.

COMPOSER. Perhaps we had better get down to the subject. I am frightfully busy. Why did you leave the company?

HELENA. I had a tiff with the director's wife.

COMPOSER. A tiff? What's that?

HELENA. Well, sir, a sort of a set-to. We fell out over something. She was rough and so was I. I couldn't stand her slandering me; that's what we had the set-to about.

COMPOSER. Just how did she slander you?

HELENA. You know, sir, I am a divorced woman. . . .

MANAGER. And what makes you think that the manager knows that?

COMPOSER [*to MANAGER*]. Skul-teti!

HELENA. What does that man want of me?

COMPOSER. Don't pay any attention to him.

HELENA. I certainly won't because I see that he is a mere servant. Yes, sir, I am a divorced woman—that everybody knows. Alex Kility was my husband, you know— [*Looks at the MANAGER in alarm. MANAGER, absorbed in his papers, motions to her to say it the way it pleases her.*] Alex Kility was a brilliant matinée idol and a splendid husband, sir, and I am legally divorced from him.

COMPOSER. Why did you divorce him?

MANAGER [*turning the pages busily*]. I'll bet she had a tiff with him.

HELENA [*excited*]. Yes, sir, I did have a tiff with him. I admit we often quarreled because he was a very congenial sort of person.

COMPOSER. Do you consider that a fault?

HELENA [*excited but sincere*]. Yes, sir. He was so congenial that he drank brandy all day long. At last it got to be so that he started drinking in the morning and never showed up at rehearsals. Sometimes

it took me two days to make him change collars, then he spent all my earnings and in the winter he sold my fur coat and chinchilla neck-piece. He did it, he said, to keep the moths from getting into them, but spent the money on liquor. . . . Yes, sir, he was overly congenial, still I stuck to him. Our row was over a cavalry officer, a captain of the 18th Hussars. It was rumored, you see, that I allowed some of these soldiers to drink cognac out of my slipper. Sandor Moje was the one they mentioned particularly, but that was a contemptible lie, not a word of truth in it, though I know that all through the season they did drink cognac out of shoes but not out of mine, sir, I swear! I hope that captain gets to be a major as truly as I ever let anybody pour anything into a shoe or a slipper of mine, much less any cognac . . . that, sir, was the cause of our first tiff but that is not why we parted, though we did part, after all.

COMPOSER [*mischievously*]. I see. And what about the director's wife?

HELENA [*mischievously*]. What director's wife?

COMPOSER. You said a while ago that you left the company because the director's wife slandered you.

HELENA. So I did, sir.

COMPOSER. How did she slander you?

HELENA. She said, sir, that my husband and I were never legally married and that we only pretended to go through divorce proceedings.

COMPOSER. That is pretty serious.

HELENA. Yes, especially in small towns. Anyway, I couldn't let it go at that and that's how it happened. And now I have come to the city to try my luck here.

COMPOSER. Can you sing?

HELENA. If I couldn't I would not dare come here. They say I have a voice like a locomotive.

COMPOSER. Just what do you mean?

HELENA. The important thing in a chorus is a strong voice and great endurance.

COMPOSER. That's right.

HELENA. The chorus, sir, isn't vocal but lung music.

COMPOSER. Righto, my child! So you have a good voice?

HELENA. I can stay under water for two minutes at a stretch, though I once had a touch of pneumonia. Just try me out, sir. An ordinary tub will do. And my figure—well, just give me the once over . . . [*Rises.*] And in tights I look like an almond.

COMPOSER. And what may that be like?

HELENA. I don't know, sir, but out in Pápa the critic said so, and he is a poet, too.

COMPOSER. I shouldn't wonder. Your figure *is* stunning and I need no critic to tell me that. And your eyes are big, beautiful and expressive.

MANAGER [*picks up the telephone receiver*]. Operator, give me 43-63. Hello! Is that you, professor? I notice among these papers that we have made no definite agreement. Anyway, I think we've had enough of this. Should have been thrown out long ago—this part of the score. Do you understand? Well, then. Hello! Hello! Remember me to your wife! [*Replaces the receiver.* To COMPOSER.] I beg your pardon.

COMPOSER. Granted. [*To HEL-*

ENA.] To sum up your request: you wish to apply for a place in the chorus and the privilege of an occasional minor part.

HELENA. Yes, say a princess or so, but nothing very long. Or a measly little countess when five or six counts are about to enter on the scene, and just a few lines like: "My, what a successful party this is . . ." or like the lines I had in the "Lace-fairy," where I had this to say: "Something seems to rot in Denmark . . ." and I turned around like this, saying: "Am I right, Your Excellency,—*n'est-ce pas*, Ambassador? . . ." Goodness me, with bits of triflings like these one can't help reaching desired goals.

MANAGER [*rises and goes to the shelf between the two windows, meanwhile muttering*]. Throw out, throw out.

HELENA. What's he always mumbling about?

COMPOSER. Don't mind him. I like you, provided that your expectations are not too fantastic. . . .

HELENA. They are not, sir. I do my own sewing, I keep no animals, I wear no jewelry, I eat no fowl, I wear no furs and I don't ride in taxis, so I can't be called extravagant, can I? What I give to beggars—and once in a great while, a cigarette or two, self-rolled at that—that really doesn't amount to much. That is all, sir.

COMPOSER. Oh, pardon me for not offering you some. Here you are.

[*Extends his cigarette case.*]

MANAGER [*into the telephone, reproachfully*]. Hello! Hello!

COMPOSER. What's that?

MANAGER. Wrong number!

HELENA. You are so very encouraging, sir. It gives me such a comforting feeling. Now I am not even afraid of those spectacles.

MANAGER. Mine? You mean me?

HELENA. Yes, you. You have such kind, sheep-like eyes.

COMPOSER. You are very sweet. But now let's go over to the piano. Let us hear a few scales.

[HELENA *sings a number of scales to the COMPOSER's accompaniment, she leaning against him frivolously at the same time.*]

COMPOSER. You have a good ear.

MANAGER. But her leaning post is not quite so good.

COMPOSER [*enthusiastically*]. Her ear is excellent!

HELENA. How sweetly he talks about my ears.

COMPOSER. And now let us hear a song or two.

HELENA. Play "Blue Forget-me-nots."

[COMPOSER *happily*. HELENA *sings, the COMPOSER accompanying.*]

"Oh, blue forget-me-not,
blue forget-me-not,
you precious flow-ow-ow-er . . .

[*Sustains the "ow" too long.*]

COMPOSER [*ceases playing*]. What's the idea?

HELENA. Why, I thought you wanted it sustained.

COMPOSER. Certainly not, just sing it in the usual manner.

HELENA. Yes, sir.

[*Starts all over again, singing the first stanza to the COMPOSER's accompaniment. While singing, she leans against the COMPOSER, placing a hand on his shoulders and subse-*

quently encircling his neck. The latter is apparently highly pleased and leans his head against her bosom.]

COMPOSER [after the song]. Bravo, sweetness, I must congratulate you! [Fervently.] You are going to get big parts, too. Tremendous parts! You shall make your career with us! [Seizes her hand and draws her to himself.] Your voice is so full of warmth that it touched my very heart. And how fresh and tinkling, like a bell. And this soft little hand. . . . And your fragrance . . .

[MANAGER gazes at the scene as if thunderstruck.]

HELENA. Oh, how happy I am!

COMPOSER [ardently]. And how that little heart of yours did palpitate while you were singing . . . and what a fragrant heart it is . . . and how burning hot, this tiny hand . . .

HELENA [exuberantly joyful]. You darling, fascinating man. . . . Honestly, I feel as if I were in heaven.

MANAGER [furiously ringing the telephone bell]. Hello, this is heaven—excuse me, I mean the manager's office. Yes . . . certainly. . . . How do you do? Now see here, professor, this can't go on like this. Pardon me, but you are hogging the show. You've gone a little beyond the limit.

COMPOSER. What's that you say?

MANAGER [pointing to the telephone]. I am giving him a piece of my mind.

COMPOSER. But isn't that sort of talk just a trifle too strong to a composer?

MANAGER. Oh, he is a pretty sensible fellow and won't feel offended. [Into the telephone.] Hello! Give my regards to your wife!

[Prolonged pause. The COMPOSER is greatly embarrassed.]

HELENA. Now dearest, suppose you hold my other hand a while because this one is almost paralyzed.

COMPOSER. Just as you say, sweetheart.

[A long and painful pause.]

COMPOSER [rises, embarrassed]. I say, Skulteti.

MANAGER [rises]. Yes, sir.

COMPOSER. Please bring me a glass of water.

MANAGER. A glass of water?

COMPOSER. Yes.

MANAGER. Oh, it's a glass of water that you desire, sir?

COMPOSER. Yes, my dear Skulteti.

MANAGER. Will you have it at once?

COMPOSER. Yes.

MANAGER. Certainly.

[Takes a tray and a glass from the desk.]

HELENA. Bring me one, too, old man.

MANAGER. You want water, too, do you?

HELENA. Yes, but open the faucet wide and let the water run long, so that it'll surely be cold.

MANAGER. I see, you want it to be cold. Very well.

HELENA. Move on.

[MANAGER exits with a withering backward glance and a shake of the head.]

HELENA. What an angry man.

COMPOSER. He isn't angry. It's just his disposition. He is an old hand here. Belongs to the family.

HELENA. Is he secretary?

COMPOSER. Oh, no. He is a sort of an old fixture; half clerk and half flunky; it's an old custom with us.

[They gaze at each other.]

HELENA. Are you going to engage me?

COMPOSER. For a hundred years.
[*Seizes both her hands passionately.*]

HELENA. Do you like me?

COMPOSER. Ever so much. I'll see that you get immense rôles. We'll start you off right in this new operetta of mine; you'll get the clog-dancing part.

HELENA. Do you love me?

COMPOSER. I adore you. [*Attempts to draw her close to him.* HELENA *resists.*] Why are you so restless?

HELENA. Heaven only knows why, but I have such a strange premonition.

COMPOSER. Surely, you are not afraid of me?

[*Attempts to hug her.*]

MANAGER [*enters with two glasses of water on the tray. Offers it first to the COMPOSER.*]. There you are, sir!

HELENA. Isn't it customary here to offer things to ladies first?

MANAGER. Yes, to ladies.

HELENA [*picks up a glass.*]. Do you mean to insinuate that I am no lady?

MANAGER. Never mind, angel child. Just drink your water, I can't hold this tray all day.

HELENA [*ingratiatingly*]. Don't be cross with me, 'uncle Skulteti. Tell me, does your nose always move whenever you are angry?

MANAGER. Drink, I tell you; I can't appreciate your jokes.

HELENA. And your eyes seem to say that you have a dear and warm heart.

MANAGER. But how warm!

FLUNKY [*enters. To COMPOSER.*]. The conductor wishes me to tell you, sir, that you are wanted down there

in a hurry because the orchestra is going to rehearse again.

COMPOSER. The orchestra is going to rehearse again?

FLUNKY. Yes, sir.

COMPOSER. Why, the conductor told me a while ago that they were through.

[*Glances at MANAGER suspiciously. MANAGER thereupon raises a big volume in front of his eyes.*]

COMPOSER [*looking daggers at the MANAGER*]. Skulteti, did you say anything to the conductor?

MANAGER. I only said that you were here.

[*Dodges.*]

COMPOSER. Good. In fact, it's very good. [*Wrought up.*] Yes, indeed, that's very lovely of you. [*With sudden determination.*] You wait here, Miss, I'll be right back.

[*Exits with FLUNKY, angrily.*]

HELENA. Yes, sir, I'll wait.

[*Sits down. During the ensuing pause, the MANAGER feigns writing, while HELENA starts to whimper, to shed tears, then to cry aloud. She produces a handkerchief and sobs in an undertone.*]

MANAGER. What's the trouble?

[*HELENA keeps on sobbing.*]

MANAGER. What is it? Why do you cry?

HELENA [*crying*]. I am in despair!

MANAGER. What about?

HELENA [*still crying*]. Because I seem to have gotten in wrong with the director or manager again. [*With a loud sob.*] Oh, my Lord, how unfortunate I am!

MANAGER. What if you did get in wrong with the manager?

HELENA. Didn't you see what he did to me?

MANAGER. Why, he didn't do a thing.

HELENA. Oh, yes, he did. He coaxed and flirted with me till I gave in to him.

MANAGER. But I witnessed the contrary. It was you who jumped and fell all over him—on his desk, shoulders, hands and head, in the usual fashion.

HELENA. II!

MANAGER. Yes, you, my child.

HELENA. You dare tell *me* that! [*Cries bitterly.*] Why, the minute I stepped in he made me an indecent proposal.

MANAGER. Well, the impudence!

HELENA [*crying*]. Didn't he?

MANAGER. I did not hear any such thing.

HELENA. Didn't he say: "Won't you be seated, dear Miss?" and "How did I deserve this honor?"

MANAGER. Is that what he said?

HELENA. Yes, and that's what I call indecent, coming from a manager. No decent manager would talk that way to an out-of-town chorus girl. What they do say is: "What do you come bothering me for, leave me be, I'm not taking on any more people," and things like that. But we poor defenseless chorus girls know what it means to have any director or manager say—[*Sobbing.*]—"Please sit down" or "I am delighted." [*With a loud sob.*] I was told that he is as rough as a top-sergeant.

MANAGER [*incensed*]. But, confound it—you blinked and winked at him, and flattered him till it became disgusting even to me. How dare

you talk! Why, you told him you felt as if you were in heaven!

HELENA [*crying*]. But what was I to tell him? I couldn't talk about my headache when I saw just what was wanted of me. What was I to do? Risk my bread and butter? [*Sobbing.*] I just had to respond.

MANAGER. There is something in what you just said.

HELENA. I was being forced into it.

MANAGER. Well now, that's a bit exaggerated. However, it's pleasantly surprising to see you in despair over it.

HELENA. The scoundrel! Every theatrical manager is a scoundrel!

MANAGER. Bravo! That's the way to talk. My dear Miss, if yours be the genuine tears of an outraged sense of honor . . .

HELENA. But that is not really the chief trouble.

MANAGER. What then?

HELENA. The fact that the manager doesn't really appeal to me. It's some one else I like.

MANAGER [*unsuspectingly*]. That's quite likely. Some eighteenth regiment cavalryman, at Stelmetz, I suppose?

HELENA. Oh, no, he is not a soldier.

MANAGER. What then?

HELENA [*whimpering*]. A civilian.

MANAGER. At Stelmetz?

HELENA. No, here in Budapest.

MANAGER. Where is he?

HELENA. Right nearby.

MANAGER. Nearby?

HELENA. Yes . . . Oh, how thick-headed you are. . . . [*Crying bitterly.*] It's you. . . .

MANAGER [*aghast*]. Me?

HELENA [*crying*]. Yes, and oh, how. . . .

MANAGER. Well, I am flabbergasted. . . .

[*Starts hurling books on the desk and floor.*]

HELENA. Well, anyway, I don't care how mad you are at me or how many books you throw at me. It won't help you any because I have taken a liking to you and I'm not going to rest till I have you chasing after me like a poodle.

MANAGER. Me?

HELENA. Yes, you.

MANAGER. Why, this is the first time you set eyes on me!

HELENA. Well, one has to see some one first some time. I can't start seeing the second time, can I?

MANAGER. But what can you be wanting of me, poor old man that I am?

HELENA. You are not old at all, you simply have no advantages.

MANAGER. Don't you get familiar with me.

HELENA. How can I help it, when your face fairly longs for familiarity? Take off your glasses.

[*Attempts to remove his spectacles.*]

MANAGER. Don't you touch my face.

HELENA. Oh, but it's such a handsome face, and gentle eyes. And what a kindly voice you have! [*Crying.*] Please save me from the tempter.

MANAGER. But why are you so scared of him?

HELENA. For many reasons. And listen, sugar face. I am about as talented as a silkworm. That's what that critic also said about me, but I am no idiot, telling that to this man-

ager. I am telling it to you because you are a nobody and I fell in love with you at first sight.

MANAGER. Very good. Go on.

HELENA. I don't want any part, except a few words, because the minute I start talking on the stage—[*Crying.*—everybody can see that I am a dunce. I am far better off if I keep quiet.

MANAGER. Yes, yes, go on!

HELENA. Well, didn't you hear him threatening me—[*Sobbing.*—with big parts?

MANAGER. You call that a threat?

HELENA [*crying*]. Not to a Duse—but it is that to me because I am without any talent and am sure to fail the minute I get a part.

MANAGER. Well, you don't have to play it.

HELENA [*crying*]. But that can't be done because all these managers go crazy when they fall in love; they insist on convincing the woman what a great artist she is or offer to make her a great artist. What do I need that for?

MANAGER [*suspiciously*]. How do you know all this so precisely?

HELENA [*crying*]. Didn't I tell you I left Stelmets because I was engaged to the director?

MANAGER. Not yet.

HELENA. Did I tell you that I gave the director's wife a thrashing?

MANAGER. Yes, you told me that.

HELENA. Well, why do you think one thrashes the director's wife? It was all on account of that. I wish they had all been dead before I got to know them!

MANAGER. Was there a quarrel, too?

HELENA. Only of the feminine sort.

MANAGER. What's that like?

HELENA. It's the kind where the chief stress is laid on one's tresses. It was a hair-pulling fest, and dialogue flew thick and fast. But I licked her—the whole ice-cream parlor can testify to that.

MANAGER. Then what?

HELENA. I had quite enough of directors and managers right then and there! You know how it is; everybody hates the director's sweetheart. That's why I left Pápa.

MANAGER. Oh, there, too, it was the director?

HELENA. Of course. It's enough to ruin a poor creature like me. Why is it that everybody loves the ticket seller's sweetheart, the cellist's sweetheart or the poor assistant secretary's sweetheart, and they are given small parts? The manager usually says: "Let's give her something and make the poor ticket seller happy," or something like that. The lady stars like them, too, because they are the sweethearts of poor people and so they give them all sorts of presents: silk nighties, black combination suits, half bottles of perfume and all kinds of raw materials like, for instance, old artificial flowers, crumpled ribbon and worn velvet because they say: "Look at the poor thing, what a sweet and modest woman she is, let's give her something and make the damn fool happy."

MANAGER. So that's why I appeal to you?

HELENA. On account of your position. Because you are such a pedestrian type of man.

MANAGER. But I haven't a copper to my name. I can't even make a living on what I earn here.

HELENA. I'll give you money, if you happen to need any.

MANAGER. Thanks, dearest, but I haven't gotten that far yet.

HELENA. Listen, Skulteti, you'd better not hesitate because you have no idea how lovable I can be. Just you come along without a struggle.

MANAGER. Very well, let us suppose—but only suppose—that you appealed to me. What would you do with the manager?

HELENA. Leave that to me. I'll tell him that I love you.

MANAGER. And if he should fire you?

HELENA. Not a chance of being fired because he is sure to hope that I'll deceive you.

MANAGER. He'll hope, eh?

HELENA. Yes, because that's how you and I impress him.

MANAGER. What matchless depravity!

HELENA. You are the people that are depraved because you misconstrue our words and acts. I may seem like a tiny, fragrant violet but if you smell me morally, you will discover that I am a genuine gem.

MANAGER. The analogy is splendid. Tell me, my child, what are you doing on the stage at all? Why do girls like you try to get into the theatre? What have they in common with it?

HELENA. Excuse me, but that . . .

MANAGER. You haven't any talent. . . .

HELENA [*rebelliously*]. How dare you say that?

MANAGER. You said so.

HELENA. That's different. It was my modesty. I have talent, but only enough to satisfy my wants. It's shameful enough that the critics de-

mand more than is enough for me. Why will they insist that I play better than I know how? All I want is art that is nice and modest, and a fiancé who is equally modest.

MANAGER. Well, I guess we have said quite enough on the subject.

[Removes his spectacles.]

HELENA. Now you have taken off those horrid glasses, too.

MANAGER. I told you once before not to touch me.

HELENA. You are so scared of me, as if you liked me.

MANAGER [embarrassed]. The very ideal!

HELENA. I can tell from your eyes that you are embarrassed, little daddy. [Attempts to embrace him.] You sweet roughneck, you. You darling beggar. You homely Adonis. You don't even realize how lovable you are. Look me in the eyes.

MANAGER [embarrassed]. Your eyes—they are beautiful, that much is certain.

HELENA. And my program. Nice and wholesome domestic happiness: soup, meat and dessert for dinner. In the afternoon I'll mend your linen. In the evening I'll put fresh covering on the bed. We won't have any wild and passionate scenes. Just the usual cleanliness and peacefulness. Why go into hysterics? I can well do without that. How about it?

MANAGER. Suits me.

HELENA. But if you should wish it, I can learn that, too.

MANAGER. I should say not. I hate it.

HELENA. That's the kind of a poor man I want, one whom I can pity as well as love.

MANAGER. You are a sweet woman, I must say.

HELENA. Am I not? [Falls on his bosom.] You poor clerk. Go on, make a little fuss over me.

MANAGER [completely encircling her]. You are very, very sweet. You really are.

HELENA. My, how good it feels here on the manly bosom of a warm man.

[COMPOSER enters hurriedly through the left door and, seeing their position, stops dumbfounded. There is a slight pause.]

MANAGER [angrily]. Here you are, look at your confounded method!

[Disengages himself from HELENA's embrace, stepping aside.]

COMPOSER [astonished]. What's that?

[After a prolonged pause, the telephone rings.]

MANAGER [goes to answer the telephone]. Hello! Who? . . . Miss Szeniczey's mother? . . . What's that? Miss Szeniczey is dying? . . . That's dreadful! . . . Oh, the doctor said she would die? [Calmly and rapidly.] I am very sorry, really I am. Good-bye. [Puts down the receiver. Pause.] Now you know what your method is good for.

COMPOSER. This is great! I never. . .

HELENA [to the COMPOSER]. Pardon me, my dear, darling Mr. Manager.

COMPOSER. What! For falling on his neck, even though you took me to be the manager!

HELENA. You mean that you are not the manager?

COMPOSER. No, sweet child, I am not. The manager stands over there.

HELENA. Skulteti?

COMPOSER. That isn't Skulteti. Skulteti is not here. That's the manager with whom we hatched this little joke. He wanted to escape the ladies. Well, he managed it pretty well, didn't he?

HELENA [*to* MANAGER]. Is this true?

MANAGER. It is.

HELENA [*bursts forth bitterly*]. The good Lord doesn't seem to love me, after all! I left Pápa on account of the director. At Stelmetz I fell in and had to leave for the same reason. And here I fell out, after falling in, and now I am in it again. God surely cannot love me!

COMPOSER. Is it really such a terrible thing?

HELENA [*desperately*]. But I don't want to be a famous actress!

MANAGER. Well, my child, we'll help you out of that predicament. You'll simply wipe your tears away and try some other theatre.

COMPOSER. Excuse me, but I won't hear of that. I have the right to engage her. That's our agreement. You may consider yourself engaged, my child.

[HELENA gives the MANAGER a puzzled look.]

MANAGER. That's right. I stand by my word.

HELENA. Oh, thank you, sir.

[*Bursts into tears.*]

MANAGER. What are you crying about now?

HELENA. Because no matter what you may say now, I know that you are fond of me. I felt it when you embraced me.

MANAGER. Silly goose . . . you charged me so fiercely that. . . There, there, quit bawling, you have no reason for it. On the contrary!

HELENA. On the contrary, what?

MANAGER. Yes, on the contrary. But what do I care? [*Confused.*] I wish you would all let me alone. [*To* COMPOSER.] You, too. What are you gaping at? [*To* HELENA.] Go on home now, like a good little girl, and come back in the morning; my secretary will fix up your contract.

HELENA. Thank you, sir. And in the meantime may I kiss your hand, you darling man?

MANAGER. No, not that, but I'll kiss your forehead, my child. [*Kisses her on the forehead.*] Go on home now, at once.

HELENA [*on the way out she bursts into tears*]. Oh, what hard luck I have. [*Turns back, still crying.*] Good-bye, sir!

[*Exits.*]

MANAGER. So long, my child.

[*Sits down. There is a brief pause.*]

COMPOSER. She is a fascinating little creature.

MANAGER [*turning the pages of a book*]. There is a lot of natural charm about her.

[FLUNKY enters and, without saying a word, removes the Szeniczey part from beneath the lamp. He exits and a long pause follows.]

MANAGER. Nice weather.

COMPOSER. Yes, it's hot. The sun is shining.

MANAGER. It must be all of eighteen degrees Celsius.

COMPOSER. Do you use the Celsius system?

MANAGER. Yes, I am a pessimist.

COMPOSER. I like Reaumur much better.

MANAGER. They say that isn't bad, either.

[Pause.]

COMPOSER [*rises*]. So, then, there is nothing further we need to discuss for the present?

MANAGER. Not a thing.

COMPOSER. Well, then, good-bye, sir!

MANAGER [*poring over his papers, flustered*]. So long. [*After the COMPOSER has made his exit, he opens the umbrella, which Miss STOBRI had forgotten, saying — wistfully and deeply moved.*] A lovely creature . . . very charming. . . .

CURTAIN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY LOVE

Adapted by

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

First produced in America by

Arthur Hopkins

October 13, 1923

CHARACTERS

CLAIRE

IVAN, *her husband*

LAUNZI, *their daughter*

FREDERIC

IMRE

ANNA, *a maid*

FIRMINA

HONORATA

DATIVA

REDEMPTA

LOUIS

DR. JEKI

DR. ANTON

MME. IVAN

CHILDREN

POLICEMAN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

Sisters

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *Living room in a rented villa on the Adriatic. At the back, two windows looking seaward; both windows are open.*

TIME: *Sunday afternoon in summer.*

It is cloudy, and a storm is brewing. When the curtain rises, FREDERIC and CLAIRE are in the room. FREDERIC is fifty-six years old, and in the prime of life, lively and extremely

elegant in appearance. CLAIRE is thirty-nine, and a beautiful woman. Distant peal of thunder.]

CLAIRE. What a crash!

FREDERIC. I fear we are in for it.

CLAIRE. And my daughter is out playing tennis. Such a silly place to have a tennis court! Not a house for miles around! No place to run to in case it rains.

FREDERIC. Oh, they'll manage somehow. Besides, when you're young you enjoy getting wet.

CLAIRE [*looking out of window*]. If it rains to-night, they'll not be able to have the concert in the garden.

FREDERIC. They'll probably have it inside.

CLAIRE. Frederic, this is dreadful.

FREDERIC. What is dreadful?

CLAIRE. All these excuses are dreadful that I have to use to hide myself from my little girl.

FREDERIC. Very well. If the idea of the concert displeases you, I am at your disposal. We can make some other arrangements.

CLAIRE. Don't be cross with me. Rushing all the way down here from Vienna, just to get cross with me!

FREDERIC. Don't tease me, Claire. What I came for, was for just one day with you.

CLAIRE. That's not true. What you came for, was for just one night.

FREDERIC. Do you expect me to deny it?

CLAIRE. Concert! To-day it is a concert. To-morrow it's something else. But whatever we call it, it's nothing but a pretext for being alone with you in your hotel. Slinking home at daybreak, creeping upstairs, terrified for fear I'll wake my daughter! Being forced to take my maid into my confidence! What a degrading life!

FREDERIC. It will all be over soon, Claire. My wife has at last consented to divorce me.

CLAIRE. It was always just a question of money.

FREDERIC. You are misinformed. If that had been the case, everything would have been settled long ago.

CLAIRE. I can't understand such people, refusing a divorce when they are no longer loved. How ridiculous to hang on like that. My husband, poor fellow, at least behaved like a man. He made no difficulties.

FREDERIC. And yet, he loved you.

CLAIRE. Loves me still.

[*Pause.*]

FREDERIC. We are going to Paris, Claire; to Paris and London; and in the autumn to America.

CLAIRE. Thank God.

FREDERIC. Together—just you and I.

CLAIRE. I hear you have been gambling pretty heavily again in Vienna.

FREDERIC. Oh, that was the most respectable thing I did in Vienna!

CLAIRE. It's shocking—the things you'll do to make money.

FREDERIC. Oh, that's ancient history. I'm not running after money any more. To-day the money runs after me. My business consists of handing it my address, and making sure it doesn't ring my neighbor's bell.

CLAIRE. Your neighbor mayn't have any?

FREDERIC. Well, it's the early bird. you know. . . .

CLAIRE. And haven't you enough even yet? Must it be always more?

FREDERIC. As long as I draw a breath, it must always be more.

CLAIRE. Luxury—power—

FREDERIC. Those I have already.

CLAIRE. What more do you want?

FREDERIC. To forge ahead! Push ahead! Keep at it! To make money, you have to keep at it—you have to love it. It's like a drug. You can't give it up.

CLAIRE. There is something terrible in that.

FREDERIC. Say, rather, something mighty, something grand.

CLAIRE. Terrible. And yet somehow triumphant, too. When I start thinking about it, strange thoughts come into my mind. I'm afraid of you. You make me shudder. I despise you— And I'm fascinated by you.

FREDERIC. Do you love me?

CLAIRE. Love you? Frederic, we belong to one another, most bitterly and beyond all doubt. Let's not be sentimental. This thing between us is too wild for that.

FREDERIC. Claire!

CLAIRE. Caresses are impossible between us. When you take my hand, my bones crack. Don't, don't, don't laugh! I want it to be so. And when I look into your eyes, when you press me to you, when you crush your mouth against my lips—I love you with hatred—and with sobs—as one might love a stranger—malignantly—like a panther—but very, very much.

FREDERIC. Claire!

CLAIRE. It may be that what I love is only what you stand for. And through that, yourself. Your mastery over this crazed and shattered world; your deliberate brutality; your pagan delight in life; your greed, like a savage and a child. There was one man, Frederic, whom I loved more than I love you; but no man has ever so inflamed me.

FREDERIC. Ah, but then, no woman was ever so inflammable!

CLAIRE. Outlaw that you are!

FREDERIC. Possibly.

CLAIRE. A life such as yours needs

no justification in the eyes of women: but what will justify it to men?

FREDERIC. The fact that I am an outlaw. I am no soft-stepping miser, no little money-lender. The world is now passing from a bad state, through an impossible state, into a tolerable state. And I am the spirit of this process of transition. Once I was a university professor: now I have sunk to the position of millionaire. I am ready to bow the knee before those whom this world has ruined; but I am not among them. I abandoned the chemical laboratory, and I sold secret formulas of dyes for dollars. Let him who will, take his honor to bed with him in the gutter; I lie in the arms of the loveliest of women. I have not been capsized in the tempest, for I have reefed my sails. I am the victory of life over the deluge. [*Excitedly taking a telegram from his pocket.*] I have twenty-one grain ships at sea to-day between South America and Europe. Rather pretty, I call that.

CLAIRE. I should say, in the opinion of the world, anything but pretty.

FREDERIC. Since I met you, I am entirely reckless of the world's opinion. You will end by making a criminal of me. But even there you will come with me.

CLAIRE. Not I.

FREDERIC. Indeed you will. Once your fortunes are linked with mine, there is no turning back for you.

CLAIRE. My friend, when your star sets, I leave you. You will pay for having stolen me from a poor man who loved me. That's rather pretty, too.

FREDERIC. Do you love me?

CLAIRE. At this moment, very,

very much. [FREDERIC *tries to embrace her. She pushes him away.*] We must wait. We must wait until to-night.

FREDERIC. We must wait. We must always wait.

CLAIRE. My daughter may come in at any moment. Did you see her?

FREDERIC [*dispiritedly*]. No.

CLAIRE. I am so glad we came here. This sea air is doing her worlds of good.

FREDERIC. She still hasn't much use for me, I suppose?

CLAIRE. She is a problem. She is a headstrong child, too serious, too old for her age.

FREDERIC. She hates me, I think.

CLAIRE. Perhaps not so much you, yourself—

FREDERIC. As the things I do.

CLAIRE. Precisely. I believe my daughter is the most rabid socialist here. The girls nickname her "the preacher." These modern girls—are so curious. I am so far away from them. Most of them are just silly little things, but mine—she quite upsets you. She is a saint—an early Christian martyr. [*She is silent.*] You are not listening. Your thoughts are somewhere else. What is on your mind?

[*Pause.*]

FREDERIC. I am wondering about you, Claire. There is somebody here that you are interested in.

CLAIRE. Who, for heaven's sake?

FREDERIC. A young boy. [*She is silent.*] You have nothing to say?

CLAIRE [*as if not taking him seriously*]. Oh, please!

FREDERIC. But I don't hear you deny it.

CLAIRE. You are making yourself ridiculous.

FREDERIC. I am not so sure. I saw the way he looked at you this morning. You were bathing in the surf. . . . And I saw the way he looked at you.

CLAIRE. Well, but really, you know, I can't prevent people from looking at me.

[*Pause. Loud peal of thunder.*]

FREDERIC. You should have the windows closed.

CLAIRE [*rising*]. And Launzi not home yet. [*She rings.*] I'll send her an umbrella. Really, I might have thought of that before. A fine Sunday afternoon! I have never seen such weather in my life! Every Sunday afternoon in this place it rains. [*Enter ANNA.*] Anna, the windows must be closed. All over the house.

[*Thunder, lightning, shower of rain. ANNA and FREDERIC close the windows.*]

CLAIRE. Heavens! Really, Anna, I think perhaps you'd better go at once to the tennis court, with an umbrella and a coat—

ANNA [*at window*]. Here comes Miss Launzi now.

FREDERIC. How they are running! They must be drenched!

CLAIRE. How silly of them! [*Beckoning from window.*] Hurry up!

[*Exit ANNA.*]

FREDERIC. That boy is with her. [*Turns from window.*] Who is this boy?

CLAIRE. I don't know. [*The rain pours.*] Why didn't they have the sense to wait somewhere!

[*The door opens. LAUNZI and IMRE rush into the room, laughing and panting.*]

LAUNZI. Oh, that was glorious!

CLAIRE. Launzi!

LAUNZI. No harm done, mother. We didn't get wet at all till just at the end—that little bit of path, you know. The Baron brought us along in his car, but he couldn't drive right up to the door.

CLAIRE. Good Lord, child! Your shoes and stockings are dripping wet.

LAUNZI [*laughing*]. Oh! That's because I fell down. Right in the middle of a puddle! Wasn't it funny, Imre?— Imre, won't you catch cold? [*Stops suddenly and looks at FREDERIC.*] You don't know Imre?

FREDERIC. I have not that pleasure.

[*IMRE introduces himself; what he says is unintelligible.*]

CLAIRE. Launzi, you must go at once and take off those wet things.

[*Rings the bell.*]

LAUNZI. Imre, dear—you ought to change, too—

IMRE. Oh, no—thank you—I'm not a bit wet.

LAUNZI [*embracing her mother*]. Mother, it was thrilling! Escaping from the storm! Oh, but the lightning and the thunder were after us! The rain swept us before it like a broom! I think it is hailing, too.

IMRE. Yes, it is just beginning to hail.

LAUNZI [*suddenly serious*]. Mother, you are not angry with Imre for coming with me? I had to bring him in! I couldn't let him run along the shore in those thin clothes, a whole mile, could I? When it was hailing. [*Very tenderly.*] And without a hat, too!

CLAIRE. I'm delighted that you brought him in.

LAUNZI. He has never been inside our house before.

IMRE. Never.

LAUNZI. How grateful I am to the

storm for driving you into our house!

CLAIRE. You must have got frightfully wet.

IMRE. Slightly.

LAUNZI. How lovely of you, mother dear, to be so sweet to poor little Imre!

[*She embraces her mother.*]

CLAIRE. Run along, child; you are drenched to the skin. Go at once and change. [*Enter ANNA.*] Anna, take Miss Launzi upstairs and see that she changes every stitch she has on. Then rub her feet well with a dry bath-towel.

LAUNZI [*beginning to tell a story*]. Mother, when the first drops fell, Hilda had just climbed into a tree. She had climbed up the tree to—

CLAIRE. That will do, dear. Run upstairs now. I haven't the slightest interest in your story until you have put dry things on.

ANNA. Come, please, Miss Launzi.

LAUNZI. All right, I'm coming. I'll tell you about it when I come back. Imre, you must wait for me. Hello, Frederic.

FREDERIC. Thanks for noticing me.

LAUNZI. Better late than never—Imre, you must wait for me.

IMRE. If I may—

LAUNZI. I shan't be gone two minutes!

[*Runs out. ANNA follows. Pause.*]

FREDERIC *advances from window.*

FREDERIC. It is coming straight down.

CLAIRE. Won't you be seated?

IMRE. Thank you.

[*Sits down.*]

FREDERIC. So you are the one.

IMRE. I beg your pardon.

FREDERIC. So you are the one.

IMRE. I do not understand you. Who is it that I am?

FREDERIC. So you are this famous chap?

IMRE. Famous? I really cannot lay any claim to that.

CLAIRE. He is a friend of my little girl.

IMRE. Oh, yes, I am a very, very good friend of hers. And she of mine.

CLAIRE. It's funny Launzi hasn't any girl friends at all.

IMRE. She does not like them. Not one of them. And I think she is right.

FREDERIC. You seem to be a very popular young man. The whole beach from Fiume to Trieste belongs to you.

IMRE. How do you mean, the beach belongs to me?

FREDERIC. That's what I hear.

IMRE. You heard that the whole beach belongs to me?

FREDERIC. That's what they are saying.

CLAIRE [*with irritation*]. What is your game with this boy?

FREDERIC. My game? Nothing at all. I was merely referring to his great success with the ladies.

IMRE. Oh, but I'm not interested in that.

CLAIRE. And after all, what is that to you—even if he were interested in that?

FREDERIC. There is no need to defend him. Nobody attacked him. I was merely paying tribute to his success—as it is being paid now. Your taking his part is in itself a proof of his success.

CLAIRE [*lightly*]. He is a friend of my daughter. I could do nothing less.

IMRE. This is my first visit.

FREDERIC. But I hope from now on you will come often.

IMRE. If I may—

CLAIRE. Please do. We should love to have you.

[*Pause.*]

FREDERIC. Well— [*Bows.*] *Au revoir, monsieur et madame.*

CLAIRE. What do you mean? Where are you going?

FREDERIC. To my hotel.

CLAIRE. Why so suddenly? And in the rain, too?

FREDERIC. I shan't get wet. My car is waiting for me in the road.

CLAIRE. But what on earth has come into your mind all at once?

FREDERIC. I have some packing I must do, if I want to get off to-night.

CLAIRE. You are leaving to-night? This evening?

FREDERIC. Yes. This evening.

CLAIRE. And what about—the concert—?

FREDERIC. I'm leaving on the nine-twenty. I shall be back on Saturday in time for the ball, and shall probably be here a week. I'm leaving the car.

CLAIRE. Well, on the whole, it is just as well. I have been depressed all day. It is much better for me to be alone.

FREDERIC. Good-bye.

CLAIRE. In all this rain?

FREDERIC. Yes, in all this rain.

CLAIRE. And you are not coming for me to-night?

FREDERIC. No.

CLAIRE. Quite sure?

FREDERIC. Quite sure.

CLAIRE. Very well, go.

FREDERIC. *Au revoir, madame.*

[*Kisses her hand.*] If I come on Saturday, I will telegraph you.

[*Turns to go.*]

CLAIRE. "If I come?" Just now you said *were* coming.

FREDERIC. I can't be sure.

CLAIRE. You child!

FREDERIC. Fifty-six years old. Good-bye. [*As she starts to follow him out.*] Please don't trouble. [*To IMRE.*] Your servant, sir.

[IMRE bows. Exit FREDERIC.

Pause.]

CLAIRE. Wouldn't you like a cup of tea?

IMRE. No, thank you. [CLAIRE goes to window and looks out with her forehead pressed against the pane.] Can you see from there?

CLAIRE. See what?

IMRE. See if he is going.

CLAIRE. Who?

IMRE. That—person.

CLAIRE. Person?

IMRE. That—gentleman. Who is he?

CLAIRE. The gentleman who has just taken leave of us, is Mr. Frederic. You have an unpleasant way of speaking of him.

IMRE. I know.

CLAIRE. Are you interested in him?

IMRE. No. [*After a pause, warmly.*] And supposing I were to say—that I *am* interested in him?—that in the whole world nothing interests me so much as he does?

CLAIRE [*with astonishment*]. My dear child!

IMRE. And that his actual going away to-night—without seeing you once more—and he has only just arrived—and he came only to be with you—only to be with you. . . .

CLAIRE. What are you talking about?

IMRE. And you think he will be able to do it? What do you think—will he have the strength to go?

CLAIRE. How dare you ask me such a question!

IMRE. I don't know. Are you going to answer it?

CLAIRE [*lighting a cigarette*]. Well, why not?

[*Sits.*]

IMRE. Will he go away without—?

CLAIRE. No.

IMRE. Are you sure? BURLINGAME

CLAIRE. Sure as death. PUBLIC

IMRE. Do you know him? LIB.

CLAIRE. I know him.

IMRE. Do you love him?

CLAIRE. Oh, now, really that is going a bit *too* far. [*Pause. Looking at him with interest.*] Who are you?

IMRE. Put me out of your house!

CLAIRE. That is not as simple a matter as I should like it to be. What an extraordinary boy! This is the first time you have spoken to me in your life. What am I to you?

IMRE. Why don't you turn me out? Why don't you drive me away? Why do you do this to me?

CLAIRE. What am I doing?

IMRE. Why do you trouble yourself with me at all?

CLAIRE. Why, indeed? [*She rises.*] Perhaps I don't know myself.

IMRE. It's horrible—that horrible man—

CLAIRE. That man is an interesting and powerful man. The master of the world.

IMRE. And I am his enemy. And all my generation is his enemy. How can you tolerate him?— Indeed—so much more than tolerate—?

[CLAIRE goes to window and

stands with her back to him.
[Pause.]

IMRE. I saw you in bathing.
[Pause.] Aren't you curious about me?

CLAIRE [*without turning*]. At the present moment, yes. Indeed I may say, very much so.

IMRE. Are you angry?

CLAIRE [*coming back to the chair*]. No, merely curious. You have plunged head-first into my life. And all of a sudden I feel I should like to know all about you, all at once.

IMRE. Why?

CLAIRE. Ah, now you have spoilt it! That's what you shouldn't have said. [*She looks him over.*] How old are you?

IMRE. Twenty-two.

CLAIRE. A gay dog?

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE. Parents alive?

IMRE. Dead.

CLAIRE. Do you drink?

IMRE. Never.

CLAIRE. Smoke?

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE. Go in for sports?

IMRE. Passionately.

CLAIRE. Got a mistress?

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE. Ever had one?

IMRE. Never.

[Pause.]

CLAIRE. *Never* had one?

IMRE. Never!

CLAIRE. Trying to get to heaven?

IMRE. No. To hell—but unde-
filed.

CLAIRE. You'll probably get mar-
ried and have fourteen children.

IMRE. Possible.

[Pause.]

CLAIRE. Got any books?

IMRE. Three hundred and twenty.

CLAIRE. How many rooms in
your house?

IMRE. One.

CLAIRE. Care for music?

IMRE. Oh, yes!

CLAIRE. Pretty well off?

IMRE. I am poor.

CLAIRE. Technical student?

IMRE. Yes.

CLAIRE. Like it?

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE. What would you prefer
to be?

IMRE. Frederic.

[Pause.]

CLAIRE. Do you dance?

IMRE. A great deal.

CLAIRE. Well?

IMRE. Extremely well.

CLAIRE. Coming to the ball next
Saturday?

IMRE. Yes.

CLAIRE. Got a mistress?

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE. Ever had one?

IMRE. Never.

CLAIRE. Economical?

IMRE. Yes.

[Pause.]

CLAIRE. Ever been abroad?

IMRE. Never.

CLAIRE. Got any brothers and
sisters?

IMRE. I am alone.

[Pause.]

CLAIRE. I suppose you are the
new generation?

IMRE. Oh, no. The new gen-
eration is still frivolous. We are the
newest generation. We are not the
sons, but the grandsons.

CLAIRE. Are you interested in
astronomy?

IMRE. Yes.

CLAIRE. Fond of candy?

IMRE. Yes.

CLAIRE. Do you think yourself handsome?

IMRE. Yes.

CLAIRE. Got a mistress?

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE. Ever had one?

IMRE. Never.

CLAIRE. Going to have one?

[*A momentary silence.*]

IMRE. I am dying for you—for your hands—your eyes—to be near you—for your wickedness, your selfishness, your falseness—for the fragrance of your body—

CLAIRE. There, there, there! Good heavens!

IMRE. Now—now you know everything about me. [*He throws himself on the floor at her feet.*] Even that which you did not want to know.

CLAIRE [*putting her hand on his head*]. There is one thing I still don't know, though I have asked you a thousand questions.

IMRE. What is that?

CLAIRE [*tenderly*]. Your name, my child.

IMRE [*looking up at her*]. Imre.

CLAIRE. I know. But your other name?

IMRE. Tarkovitch.

CLAIRE [*stroking his hair*]. Imre Tarkovitch. [*Very tenderly.*] Thank you. Now I know everything.

IMRE [*passionately, leaping to his feet*]. What do you want from me? What are you doing with me?

CLAIRE. Do sit down.

[*She rises and goes away from him.*]

IMRE. Why didn't you turn me out at the first word I spoke? I should now be crying happily out there in the rain. But you let me stay. And now I'm lost. I've been

destroyed—here—now—the twenty-seventh day of August—in this room. . . . My virgin love—I've cried it aloud with ugly words! What good was my strength, my innocence, my youth, my healthy body! Everything is spoilt. My life is gone to pieces. Ever since I saw you and gazed at you and loved you. Winter and summer alike, I sleep naked on my bed, with the windows open and the wind blowing over me—and never once have I had a carnal thought! Never once have I thought of—of—only since I saw you!

[*LAUNZI enters unobserved, carrying a large parcel. She stands still and watches.*]

CLAIRE. Since you saw me?

IMRE. Since I saw you, all night long I'm conscious of my body—all night long—its parched heat—its nakedness—its loneliness—its hunger! And I dream of the holy monks of old, who, when their flesh cried out with desire, rolled themselves naked in snow and ice—and in nettles—and were stung by gnats—who thrust their hands into the licking flames, to still with torment the torment of desire!

CLAIRE. What an explosion! And yet in its honesty not unattractive.—Awkward, however—frightfully awkward. Really at your age boys are not usually so awkward. [*Turns and catches sight of LAUNZI standing before the open door.*] Well, have you changed your clothes?

LAUNZI. Yes, mother.

[*Approaches slowly and puts down parcel. Pause.*]

CLAIRE. Imre says he's coming to the ball on Saturday.

LAUNZI. Yes?

CLAIRE. What have you got there?

LAUNZI. The wings. They have just come.

CLAIRE. How lovely— Now you can be the angel, after all.

IMRE. It is just the part for her.

LAUNZI. Frederic brought them from Vienna. I never dreamed they would make such an enormous parcel. I brought them in to show you.

IMRE. Let me see them.

LAUNZI. Oh, no. It really is not worth the trouble.

IMRE. Why, aren't they pretty?

[*Opens the parcel.*]

LAUNZI. Yes, they are pretty.

[*She looks dreamily at the wings, now unpacked.*]

CLAIRE. Why, how perfectly lovely! Oh, you'll make a beautiful angel in those wings. A real, beautiful, sad, little Botticelli angel. [*Taking the wings up.*] Won't they be awfully heavy?

LAUNZI. No.

IMRE. Have you tried them on?

LAUNZI. No. Just held them in my hands. They are very light.

CLAIRE. What are they made of?

IMRE. Some very light material.

LAUNZI. They look as if they could fly all by themselves.

CLAIRE. Are you rehearsing regularly?

[*LAUNZI does not hear her. Pause.*]

IMRE. Oh, every day. There are five more rehearsals: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On Saturday the performance. And the big ball.

LAUNZI [*standing at the window*]. The rain has stopped. The sun is shining.

CLAIRE. Why, so it is! Come on,

let's go out, dear. We'll have tea outside. [*She comes to window, throws it open, puts her arm lovingly around LAUNZI.*] Oh, I love this damp weather after a storm! How sweet it smells! Let's hurry and get out. I'll just get my hat.

[*Exits. Pause.*]

IMRE [*also looking out of window*]. How the sea glitters.

[*Pause.*]

LAUNZI [*simply*]. The sun is shining—on the sea—

[*Without warning strikes the wings violently with her fist.*]

IMRE. Don't! You'll break them!

LAUNZI. I don't care.

IMRE. Oh, but your beautiful wings!

LAUNZI. I don't care about anything. They are not beautiful at all. They are pretty. They are made out of wire and rags. If they were real—then—[*She plucks a feather from them, and holds it up before her.*]—then every feather plucked from them would bleed. [*She drops the feather. It falls slowly to the floor.*] And then they would be beautiful. [*Pause.*] Has Frederic gone?

IMRE. Yes.

LAUNZI. How do you like him?

IMRE. I don't. Do you?

LAUNZI. He is going to marry my mother. My father is a broken man.

IMRE. Who is Frederic?

LAUNZI. The man who is going to marry my mother. He feeds us.

IMRE. I hate him. [*Enter CLAIRE wearing her hat. To CLAIRE.*] Good-bye.

CLAIRE. You are not going?

IMRE. Yes, I'm going.

CLAIRE. Won't you come with us?

IMRE. I'm sorry. Good-bye.

[*Bows and goes out.*]

CLAIRE. Good-bye. [*Pause.*] Why didn't you say good-bye to him?

LAUNZI. I don't know. Didn't I say good-bye to him?

CLAIRE. No. You are nervous.

LAUNZI. No.

CLAIRE. What were you talking about?

LAUNZI. About wings. And about my father.

CLAIRE [*looking at the wings*]. How kind of Frederic to have had them made. He is very fond of you. He adores you.

LAUNZI. Does he? I, that have been so loved by my father—what can it mean to me, what a stranger gives me?

CLAIRE [*to hide her embarrassment, carefully inspects one of the wings*]. This one is bent.

LAUNZI. Yes, I struck it.

CLAIRE. You struck it?

LAUNZI. Because they won't help me to fly.

[*Moves away.*]

CLAIRE. You are restless.

LAUNZI. No.

CLAIRE. What was it you wanted to tell me about Hilda? You had started saying that she had climbed a tree—

LAUNZI. It is not interesting.

CLAIRE. Don't you want to come with me? Would you rather be with some of your girl friends?

LAUNZI. I have no girl friends. I don't like them.

CLAIRE. Not even Ily?

LAUNZI. No, I can't talk to her any more. She makes me ashamed.

CLAIRE. And Olga Szabo?

LAUNZI. She dances naked to

Beethoven. And then she falls in a faint.

CLAIRE. But Hilda, the one who climbed a tree?

LAUNZI. She has a lover.

[*Pause.*]

CLAIRE. Nobody is good enough for you!

LAUNZI. Nobody.

CLAIRE. You are hard. In order to live you must compromise. You have to smooth things over.

LAUNZI. I can't.

CLAIRE. Then how do you expect to live?

LAUNZI. Under certain conditions—not at all.

CLAIRE. What is the matter with you? What do you want?

LAUNZI. Escape—from something. I don't know what—from all those people—from this whole world—if I could only fly away on these wings! But I can't, they are only wire and rags.

CLAIRE. Where would you fly to?

LAUNZI. Away! To escape!

CLAIRE. Escape from what?

LAUNZI. From nothing! From everything! From myself—from life—

CLAIRE. What do you mean by that word "life"? How dare you pronounce it? What do you know of it—of what it really is?

LAUNZI. I? Who have been a year in the university? Who have dissected men in the dissecting room?

CLAIRE. Corpses, my child, not men—dead bodies.

LAUNZI. Are the dead not men?

CLAIRE. No.

LAUNZI. The dead? Why, they are the proudest, the most beloved, the calmest, the wisest—the most to be envied—

CLAIRE. But not men.

LAUNZI. Then what are they?

CLAIRE. Oh, Launzi, for goodness sake, let's not go into that now. Come down to the beach with me. We'll have something to eat at the casino. What would you like to

have? You may have anything you like.

LAUNZI. Mother, I want the sea.

CLAIRE. Well, you shall have some iced coffee. Come along.

[*Takes her by the arm. Exeunt.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

[SCENE: CLAIRE'S bedroom, in the same villa. Six days later. On the right, in front, a door. On the left, in front, a large window overlooking the sea. At the back, at the right, a bed made for the night. At the back at the left, a door, leading to the other apartments. Dawn. The window is open. A small lamp is burning beside the bed. When the curtain rises, there is nobody in the room. After a short pause enter CLAIRE and LAUNZI on the right. They have come from the ball. CLAIRE is in evening dress, LAUNZI is dressed as an angel. They are both in after-the-ball spirits, flushed with excitement.]

LAUNZI. What a lovely party!

CLAIRE. Well—*that's* over. I certainly had a wonderful time.

LAUNZI. Mother, I danced an awful lot!

CLAIRE. There was something desperate about the whole brilliant affair—did it strike you?—Frightfully exciting—appealed to me like anything—So in keeping with these crazy times. Everything you go to nowadays is like that. People seem to take it for granted that to-morrow there is going to be an earthquake or a flood.

[*She goes to turn on the light.*]

LAUNZI [*at window*]. Oh, mother, please don't put on the light!

CLAIRE. Why not?

LAUNZI. Come here. The sun is just about to rise. What a wonderful sight. Those pale colors beginning to move across the water.

CLAIRE [*going to window*]. Lovely. Really.

LAUNZI [*pointing with her finger*]. Look there—that reddish gold veil down there, under that cloud.

CLAIRE. What time is it?

LAUNZI. Three o'clock.

CLAIRE [*sighing*]. How soon it gets light.

LAUNZI. It is hard to leave this lovely sea. To-morrow we shall have passed beyond my sea, mother. [*Pensively.*] Paris! What will Paris be like?

CLAIRE. That's a sea, too, my child.

LAUNZI. And—what is there beyond that sea?

CLAIRE. The future. My future. And yours, too. We shall spend our next Christmas in America.

LAUNZI. We shall be leaving many things behind us, mother.

CLAIRE. Many things. A very good reason for not looking back.

LAUNZI. My father—

[*Withdraws from window.*]

CLAIRE [*lowering the blind*]. Turn on the light, darling. Let's make it night again. We *must* have some sleep.

LAUNZI [*turning on the light*]. I couldn't sleep.

CLAIRE. You *must*, if we are to start this evening. We have a long journey before us; and there is no getting any sleep on a train, it shakes one to bits. Undo my dress, there's a dear.

[*Turns her back to LAUNZI.*]

LAUNZI [*unfastening CLAIRE's dress*]. You have a lovely neck. All the evening I was looking at your beautiful shoulders. How young you are!

CLAIRE. A sure sign of age!

LAUNZI. What, that your shoulders are beautiful?

CLAIRE. No, that you say so. [*The dress is unfastened.*] Now I'll unfasten your wings. Were they awfully heavy?

LAUNZI. No. It almost hurts me to part with them.

CLAIRE. You don't want to part with anything. But that is the secret of life, my dear. It is foolish to nurse the past. You must let it die. If you keep pampering it, it will stay with you. You must keep offending it, then it will go away.

LAUNZI. How strange that it should be you who rob me of my wings!

CLAIRE. I rob you—?

LAUNZI. You have torn off my wings, so that I never shall be able to fly

CLAIRE [*tenderly*]. Oh, Launzi, what nonsense! Really, child, you are carrying these fancies too far. It is unhealthy. Wings! Look at them! Wire and bits of feather and muslin rags—fancy-dress—play-acting—that's all. And the wire has made a nasty cut in your pretty little shoulder.

LAUNZI. It doesn't matter. It was nice to wear them.

CLAIRE [*examining LAUNZI's shoulder*]. It has actually broken your skin.

LAUNZI. It really doesn't matter. I don't like my skin. There is something wrong with my skin.

CLAIRE [*quizzically*]. Too tight for you?

LAUNZI. Too tight—too loose—I don't know, it doesn't seem to fit me. I could jump out of it.

[*Short pause.*]

CLAIRE. Are you in love?

LAUNZI. No. [*CLAIRE, having undressed, throws herself on the bed.*] Sleepy?

CLAIRE. No.

LAUNZI. You are excited, too.

CLAIRE. No, I'm too tired to sleep.

LAUNZI. You were so popular, darling! I was terribly proud of you. And Frederic for once was quite pleasant and reasonable. Didn't seem to be jealous at all. Mother, let's have a cigarette.

[*They light cigarettes.*]

CLAIRE. Are you in love?

LAUNZI. No.

CLAIRE. Was the big storm on Monday?

LAUNZI. No, Sunday. Monday was the day we went in the motor boat to Lovrana.

CLAIRE. On Tuesday—did you see him?

LAUNZI. Whom?

CLAIRE. Did you see him on Tuesday?

LAUNZI. Whom do you mean?

CLAIRE. I asked you whether you saw him.

LAUNZI. Yes.

CLAIRE. At the tennis club?

LAUNZI. Yes.

CLAIRE. And on Wednesday?

LAUNZI. I didn't see him.

CLAIRE. On Thursday?

LAUNZI. Didn't see him on Thursday, either. And you?

CLAIRE. Didn't see him either on Wednesday or Thursday.

LAUNZI. And on Friday?

CLAIRE. That was yesterday.

LAUNZI. I know. Did you see him?

CLAIRE. Are you in love with him?

LAUNZI. No.

CLAIRE. Because if you're not, then I'll tell you when I saw him—and where I saw him.

[Pause.]

LAUNZI. Tell me.

CLAIRE. We had gone to bed at ten o'clock. I mean yesterday, of course. I was reading here in bed. At quarter to eleven I switched off the light and went to open the window—this window. It was then that I saw him.

LAUNZI. Here?

CLAIRE. Yes. He came along the shore, then passed the stone wall to the lower gate. When he reached the gate he stopped. Presently the gate opened, and he stepped inside.

LAUNZI. Did you see who opened the gate?

CLAIRE. Yes.

LAUNZI. Who was it?

CLAIRE. Anna.

[Silence.]

LAUNZI. Anna?

CLAIRE. Yes, Anna. Our chambermaid. [Pause.] A little later, I went very softly to Anna's door. I heard his voice.

[Silence.]

LAUNZI. Tell me, mother, where shall we stay in Paris?

CLAIRE. Hotel Continental. Why do you ask?

LAUNZI. To change the subject. Shall we be long in Paris?

CLAIRE. About a month. Frederic has business there that will keep him about a month. He has wired ahead for rooms.

LAUNZI. Are you sure it was he?

CLAIRE. Who wired for rooms?

LAUNZI. No. Who was here at the gate. Last night.

CLAIRE. Oh. Yes, I am sure.

LAUNZI. Did he look up here?

CLAIRE. No.

LAUNZI. And Anna was waiting for him—

CLAIRE. Yes. Perhaps I was wrong to tell you.

LAUNZI. Why?

CLAIRE. I should perhaps have spared—

LAUNZI. Whom should you have spared?

CLAIRE. Well—let us say—him.

LAUNZI. He never took his eyes off you one minute at the ball—not one minute. Everywhere you went, he followed you with his two eyes. They were like flames, his eyes. I wasn't the only one who noticed it. Lots of people noticed it. Frederic saw.

CLAIRE. He did?— How tiresome. Young people are so— [*Sound outside the door. CLAIRE looks in that direction.*] Did you hear that?

LAUNZI. What?

[*Sound is repeated.*]

CLAIRE. There it is again. [*She points suddenly.*] Somebody is turning the knob! Did you see that? Watch! [*They both watch.*] There! Did you see that?

LAUNZI. Yes. It moved. Somebody is trying to open the door— [*Rises.*] Mother!—I—I—

CLAIRE. Where are you going?

LAUNZI. I'm going to my room.

[*Moves toward door leading to other apartments.*]

CLAIRE. What? And leave me here alone?

LAUNZI. Mother—whoever is there—takes it for granted that the door—is not locked—or that—it will be opened.

CLAIRE. The door of my bedroom?— You are out of your senses!

[*They listen and watch. Repeated movement.*]

LAUNZI. Mother—you must really—let me go.

CLAIRE. Do you suspect me of—?

LAUNZI [*imploringly*]. Mother!

CLAIRE [*suddenly*]. My God! Launzi! Supposing it should be a burglar!

LAUNZI. Don't let that worry you.

[*Takes a revolver from the front of her dress.*]

CLAIRE [*sitting up in bed—in a loud voice*]. Who's there?

[*Soft knocking.*]

LAUNZI. That's no burglar.

[*Throws the revolver on the bureau. Moves slowly toward the door. CLAIRE draws her dressing-gown loosely about her shoulders. On arriving at the door, LAUNZI looks back at her mother.*]

CLAIRE. What do you mean by looking at me like that? Open the door! I tell you to open it! [LAUNZI opens the door. Enter IMRE, in dress clothes, distracted, agitated, taken aback by the presence of LAUNZI. Silence. LAUNZI starts to close the door.] Don't close that door! [To IMRE.] How dare you! Leave this room! [LAUNZI covers her face with her hands and is about to go out by the other door.] No! Stay where you

are! [To IMRE.] You, too! [She leaps out of bed.] Now! Will you be so good as to explain to us—you are intoxicated.

IMRE. No, I am not.

CLAIRE. Who told you you might intrude here at this time of night? Whom did you expect to see?

IMRE. I only—

CLAIRE. Whom?

IMRE. You.

CLAIRE. Indeed! I should be interested to know who let you in.

IMRE. I—I climbed over the fence— You are going to Paris! To-night! They are taking you away from me! And I shall never see you again!

CLAIRE. You have most *certainly* been drinking.

IMRE. Oh, yes, yes, yes! I have. I have. I have.

LAUNZI. Mother, don't torture him! Let us send him away, mother.

CLAIRE. Oh, no! Not till he tells us—if he has a grain of honesty left in him—

LAUNZI. Mother!

CLAIRE. Will you be quiet! He is going to tell us that nobody ever gave him permission to—to do what he is doing! [To IMRE.] It is not true that you climbed over the fence!

IMRE. No.

CLAIRE [to LAUNZI]. You see.

IMRE. I came in through the gate. The gate was open.

CLAIRE. Yes. The servant left it open—for her cavalier.

IMRE [*bitterly*]. Yes, the servant-girl left it open. Oh, it's easy enough, if you only know the way, to arrange to have a gate left! A few lies, a few lying kisses, promises of love! Any one can do it! And all, all just to get inside your house—to be near you, to spy upon you, to stalk you!

BURLINGAME

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Oh, yes, the servant-girl left it open! Poor Anna; poor, poor, easy Anna! She is waiting for me now—in her bed.

LAUNZI [*shrieking*]. That's not true!

IMRE. Oh, yes, it is! It's all true. I have sunk as low as that.

LAUNZI [*quivering all over*]. Mother—I am going—out—

CLAIRE. Oh, no, you are not! He is going to clear this thing up! He is going to clear me! Me!

LAUNZI. Mother—let him go.

CLAIRE. No! He is going to suffer for this! He is going to tell us how he dared lay his hand on that door!—How *dared* you presume to—

IMRE. I had to come! He told me you were leaving for Paris to-night! I went with him to his hotel—saw him into his room—because I couldn't go home with the hideous thought in my mind, that that man—after the ball—all heated and flushed—might be coming here to you!

CLAIRE [*with disgust*]. Bah!

IMRE [*going on without stopping*]. And he told me that you are leaving for Paris to-night! He asked me into his room just to tell me that you are leaving to-night for Paris!— Just to mock at me! He had no mercy on me! He said to me, "Why don't you come along with us?"— Because he *knows* how impossible that is—mocking me, because I am poor! And I know why he did it, too! He was jealous because—

CLAIRE [*shouting*]. Because what?

LAUNZI. Mother, why do you shout at him like that?

CLAIRE [*as before*]. Jealous because of what?

IMRE. Because of the way we danced together—because of the way I held you in my arms! Jealous of the perfection of our dancing! Jealous! Because our bodies were made for each other!

CLAIRE. Don't *say* those things before my daughter! Am I responsible for your vile imagination? I dance the same with everybody! You are malicious and a slanderer.

IMRE [*breaking down, almost crying*]. I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to see you.

CLAIRE. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? In the presence of my child! It is unspeakable! Unspeakable!

LAUNZI. Mother, leave him alone.

IMRE. How kind my little comrade is to me—my merciful, little comrade!

CLAIRE. Answer me this: what was your purpose in coming here? What were you thinking of, to turn the knob of my door? What were you expecting?

IMRE. I don't know. Maybe—just this, what's happened here now, this ghastly misery. That was what I wanted! This is what I've been looking forward to—[*Simply, pathetically.*—ever since Sunday—in the thunderstorm— Do you remember?

CLAIRE. That is a lie!

IMRE. I worshiped you. You lifted me so high—so high—and then you left me, and I crashed down. I lost my mind, I think. And then to-night, at the ball—you smelled so sweet—and you smiled—and your eyes—oh—

CLAIRE. Launzi! He lies!

IMRE. I lie! I lie! Yes, yes! I lie! It is a lie that I stand here—so

near your bed—where you sleep—it is a lie that I see the whiteness of your shoulders—your—

CLAIRE [*yelling*]. Get out of here now!

LAUNZI. Mother!

CLAIRE [*to LAUNZI*]. Go, darling; go away.

LAUNZI. Mother! It's too late now. I can't go now. Oh, mother, I feel such pity for this boy! What will he do? To-morrow! And the day after to-morrow! [CLAIRE *sinks down on the bed.*] Mother!

[*She kneels beside CLAIRE, who lays her hand on LAUNZI's head.*]

CLAIRE [*quietly*]. Leave us. [IMRE *stands speechless, with bowed head. Very calmly, rising.*] Will you be so good as to leave this room? Otherwise, I shall be obliged to have you put out by the servants. By Anna.

LAUNZI [*still kneeling, without lifting her head*]. Go, Imre. Please go, Imre; dear, sweet, little Imre.

[*Pause. Enter ANNA, timidly, wrapped in a big shawl, leaving the door open.*]

CLAIRE [*alarmed by ANNA's entrance, fearfully*]. Yes, Anna? What is it?

ANNA. Mr. Frederic is here.

[*Pause. Enter FREDERIC. ANNA steals out.*]

FREDERIC [*in dress clothes, not having changed since he left the ball*]. I heard him after he left my room—stealing up and down the corridor—watching and listening—trying to find out whether I had gone to bed. But I, too, was listening and watching. I followed him here. [Looks around the room, then throws down

his hat. To IMRE.] What are you doing in this room?

IMRE. Sir! Where else would I be but in this room? I love her. And you are taking her away. Do what you like with me.

FREDERIC [*rushing at IMRE and seizing him roughly*]. You young pup! [Shakes him violently—CLAIRE screams.] Out you go! I'll teach you where you ought to be! Damn your impudence! I'll take a horse-whip to you! [Brutally thrusts IMRE out the door, IMRE making no attempt to defend himself. For a moment the two women are alone in the room. In the center of the room lies FREDERIC's straw hat. Without, may be heard the sound of FREDERIC's cursing. Reënter FREDERIC.] Young pup! The impudence of him! Coming here!

[Looking around him hesitatingly, and stands as if expecting something.]

LAUNZI [*very calmly and in a very dignified manner*]. Frederic, now go away. [FREDERIC looks at her in surprise, but is cowed with her serious air. Advances to CLAIRE, who is almost fainting, and respectfully kisses her hand. Then he slowly lifts his hat from the floor and goes out on right, closing the door after him. Long pause. LAUNZI walks up and down slowly.] I want a cigarette. [CLAIRE points to the bureau, LAUNZI takes one.] Will you have one?

CLAIRE. No, thanks. [LAUNZI lights a cigarette. Then takes revolver from the bureau and puts it back in the front of her dress. CLAIRE, half dead with exhaustion, in a low voice.] Where did you get that revolver?

LAUNZI. I bought it.

CLAIRE. Is it loaded?

LAUNZI. Thirteen cartridges.

CLAIRE. Did you take it with you to the ball?

LAUNZI. I take it with me everywhere I go.

CLAIRE [*with a weary, painful smile*]. An angel with a revolver.

LAUNZI. Oh, but that is the kind of angel I am. I am none of your sugar angels. I am not sweet. I am a bitter angel, mother. A stern angel. An angel of death. With a cold little wicked revolver between my warm little breasts.

[*Pause.*]

CLAIRE. He had been drinking.

LAUNZI. He had not. Oh, mother, can't you see? He lied because he was ashamed to suffer so.

CLAIRE. Good God!

[*She covers her face with her hands. Pause.*]

LAUNZI. Mother. [*Pause.*] Mother, why don't you answer?

CLAIRE. My heart is breaking, darling.

LAUNZI. Mother, do as I do. Smoke a cigarette. It's wonderful. It makes you so detached and serene, like a Hindoo god. It changes everything, this little occupation, this tiny exertion, this small fire and thin smoke, this little illusion built out of fragrance and smoke, this little friend. Have a cigarette, mother. [*Gives her a cigarette. CLAIRE puts it mechanically into her mouth. LAUNZI strikes a match for her.*] That's right. And now I am thirty-nine, mother, and you are eighteen. Don't cry, dear. Smoke your cigarette. Breathe in the smoke deep, deep. [*Pause.*] And listen quietly to what I have to say. I am not going with you to Paris. I am going back to my

father. Why didn't you let me leave the room when he knocked?

CLAIRE [*with renewed agitation*]. Oh, I couldn't, Launzi! He had no right! I wanted you to hear—!

LAUNZI. I shan't be going with you to Paris. I shall go back to Budapest and stay with my father. You and I cannot travel together, mother. We cannot live together.

CLAIRE [*in a reverie*]. We cannot—live—together—

LAUNZI. No.

CLAIRE. Oh, my child!

LAUNZI. Because I am in love with him. As much in love with him as he is with you, my darling, beautiful, sweet-smelling, lovely mother! Oh, I am much more in love with him than he is with you.

CLAIRE. It is not my fault—that he behaved so foolishly—

LAUNZI. It was you that made him a fool. You played with him. Why did you?

CLAIRE. I?

LAUNZI. Yes, you tortured him.

CLAIRE. When? I never spoke to him but once in my life, I swear to you. Only once in my life. And that was last Sunday afternoon, when you brought him in here out of the storm.

LAUNZI. But then you played with him. Why did you?

CLAIRE. That's not true!

LAUNZI [*imploringly*]. Oh, mother dear—

[*Pause.*]

CLAIRE. My child, I am not the most virtuous woman in the world. As far as that goes, the most virtuous woman in the world might well be burnt at the stake for her sins. You may imagine what I think of myself.

LAUNZI. Mother, darling.

[*She kneels by CLAIRE, and puts her arms about her.*]

CLAIRE. No, no, let me speak. I want to tell you—brave, intelligent, little head—my little soul—my little sister—my judge—I want to tell you everything.

LAUNZI [*half rising*]. Oh, no, mother, *don't!* *Don't* tell me! I'd rather you didn't.

CLAIRE. I must tell you. I want you to know *why* I played with him. *Why* I tortured him.

LAUNZI [*covering her ears with her hands*]. No! No! No! *Don't* tell me! You don't *need* to tell me! I don't want to *hear* it! Mother, *don't!*

CLAIRE [*with increasing vehemence*]. Launzi, you must listen to me. It is only just that you should hear what I have to say. It was not he that I tortured, darling, but myself—my shipwrecked soul! I, too, am a human being; I, too, am a woman; I, too, have the right to love what is beautiful and young. I, too! And when I saw him there—*him*, and *Frederic*—they were standing face to face—he was all that *Frederic* was not—beautiful, clean, young, honorable—poor. Darling, mother, too, was born to love those things. For a moment it seemed that a pure young love like his might still save me from—from what I see ahead. But then—oh, no. But it made such a wound in me, that I had to close it with my hand, as if it had been a living mouth, to keep it from crying out; and I had to stop it, as if it had been an ear, to keep it from hearing what my silly hope had been. Oh, well— [*Suddenly she puts her handkerchief to her mouth and sobs.*] Don't mind me,

darling. I shall be all right as soon as I get to Paris.

LAUNZI [*hugging her tight*]. Mummie! Mummie!

[*Deep silence.*]

CLAIRE. A Sunday afternoon—a nothing. It sometimes happens that a dead man lying in his coffin will sigh—a sigh as if of bitter pain—and the watchers are terrified. It is air, his imprisoned, last breath escaping from his lungs. Such a corpse am I. That is what happened to me last Sunday afternoon. I shall never sigh again. My breath *is gone out of me forever*. Go back to your father, my child. I know all that it means to me to say those words. Nevertheless, I say them.

LAUNZI. Mother, I am dying for love of him.

CLAIRE. He will be there, Launzi. I shall be out of your way. You must make him turn to you. You must make him *yours*.

LAUNZI. It would have to be something very great to make him forget—such a beautiful person—such a beautiful, burning, clever, changing, interesting person!

CLAIRE. Such a bad woman!

LAUNZI. Such a good woman! Who will ever be able to take your place with him? People like him—maybe the least they ask is that we shall die for them. Then they will fall in love with us—and mourn for us tenderly, with tears—when we lie all in white in a silver coffin, between gold and candles. Oh, the sound of that passionate, passionate weeping—if we could only hear that then!

CLAIRE. To die—it's easy to talk about.

LAUNZI. To live—it's impossible to think about.

CLAIRE [*wearily*]. You'll get over that.

LAUNZI. No, mother.

[*Pause.*]

CLAIRE. What time is it?

LAUNZI [*looking at the clock on the bureau*]. Four o'clock.

CLAIRE. Four o'clock. Launzi, at noon we have to be at the—

LAUNZI. No, mother, not at noon.

CLAIRE. You don't even know what I mean.

LAUNZI. I don't need to know. There is no more "Noon" for us—only "Now." We are together for the last time. Don't cry. Look at me; see how quiet I am. Say good-bye to me. Don't cry, mother. Don't cry, my little girl. . . . You are going west and I am going east—so we *have* to say good-bye. You go

to your husband, and I to my father; neither of us to—him. [CLAIRE catches LAUNZI's hand and kisses it.] Oh, what are you doing? Don't, please, mother, it's I who—[*Passionately kisses CLAIRE's hand.*]— And your eyes—your beautiful eyes—and your darling forehead—and your hand once more—oh, a hundred, hundred times your hand—mother—

[*While saying these words, LAUNZI has been kissing her mother earnestly and passionately. Now she rises, without a tear, very gravely and simply, and slowly goes out through the door at the back on the left. When the door has closed behind her,*]

CURTAIN
BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

ACT THREE

[SCENE: Lower quay of the Danube Embankment, Budapest. Just before sunrise. A few days later. On the left, a shanty, which serves as the booking-office of the landing-stage; on the right, a warehouse-shanty. Between the two, a glimpse of the dark, flowing Danube. On the farther shore one or two lamps are flickering. In front of the wall of the shanty, the window of the booking-office. In front of the warehouse shanty, a few cases and barrels and a long ladder, lying on the ground and propped against the shanty.

When the curtain rises, there is nobody on the stage save a nun, SISTER HONORATA, who is sitting on the bench. She is an elderly woman, wearing the dress of a hospital sister and is reading a breviary by

the dim light of the electric lamp. Silence. The deep, slow sound of tug-bells is heard from the direction of the Danube.

HONORATA listens for a moment, and then continues reading. Enter on left, FIRMINA and DATIVA, nuns dressed like HONORATA.]

FIRMINA. Sister Honorata is here.

DATIVA. Are we late?

HONORATA. No, you are not late. On the contrary, we all came too early. The first boat will not leave before a quarter to five.

DATIVA. We have hurried. We were frightened by those bells, thinking it was the boat for Teteny.

HONORATA. It was not our boat. They were the bells for a tug.

[FIRMINA and DATIVA seat themselves on the bench.]

FIRMINA. Are you alone, Sister?

DATIVA. Sister Redempta is not coming?

HONORATA. She has been here some time. She is on board a barge down there.

FIRMINA. A barge?

HONORATA. Dear Sisters, a most unfortunate thing has occurred. I would I had not seen what I saw. A young girl jumped from the bridge into the Danube.

[FIRMINA crosses herself.]

DATIVA. Mary Immaculate, preserve us!

[Crosses herself.]

HONORATA. She jumped yonder, from the Margareta Bridge. She was dressed in white. We could see her white form carried along in the black water. But they got her out; and she was still alive.

FIRMINA. Praise be to God! And who was so favored as to be the one to rescue her?

HONORATA. Dear Sisters, a poor sailor from the barge plunged at once into the river and swam out to her. He was able at length to reach her; but she fought him off, and it was only after a desperate struggle that he succeeded in bringing her to shore.

DATIVA. She will surely live?

HONORATA. I am happy to say that she is already out of danger. Two ambulance men from the hospital were immediately summoned and Sister Redempta has been with her from the first. I returned here to await your arrival.

[Between the two shanties, at the back, may be seen a small group of people coming up from the direction of the shore. They are coming up

the steps leading from the river. LOUIS and REDEMPTA, who are supporting LAUNZI, are accompanied by DR. JEKI and DR. ANTON. LOUIS is an elderly man looking like a tramp; he is barefoot and is wearing nothing but a dirty, wet pair of trousers turned up to the knees, and a ragged vest.]

LOUIS. Here you are, Miss. Here's a seat for you.

[On hearing his voice, the three nuns rise.]

FIRMINA. They are bringing her.

[The group of people moves slowly forward, supporting LAUNZI, who is deathly pale, but smiling. She is wearing a dark skirt, too long for her, and a long-sleeved dark jumper. Her head is wrapped in a dark shawl, out of which her little face shows sadly white.]

JEKI. She'd better sit here a while.

LAUNZI. You see, doctor, I *didn't* need to be carried.

JEKI. Excellent, my dear young lady! Now just sit down here for a moment. [To LOUIS.] Where's the policeman?

LOUIS. The sergeant's gone down to the hotel to telephone, your honor.

JEKI. The sergeant? What do you mean?

LOUIS. The policeman, sir—he is a sergeant. He has gold bands and a star!

[Demonstrates on his neck.]

JEKI [smiling]. I see.

[LAUNZI is sitting on the bench.

REDEMPTA silently greets FIRMINA and DATIVA.]

ANTON [soothingly, with a doc-

tor's sense of humor]. Now, when the nice little girl has had a nice little rest, we will take her in a nice comfortable automobile to the nice quiet hospital.

LAUNZI. No! No! *Please* not the hospital! Don't take me to the hospital!

REDEMPTA. There, there, my child, you shall not be taken to the hospital.

LAUNZI. I want to go home! I want to go home to my father! I asked the policeman to telephone home—to our house—Joseph 2264.

REDEMPTA. He has gone, my dear. He is telephoning now. He will be here presently with a message from your father.

HONORATA [*in an undertone to the doctors*]. If the good doctors will only be kind enough to wait a moment—it may be that her father will have other plans for her. Oh, how must her poor mother feel! Are you better, my child?

LAUNZI. Quite well, thank you.

HONORATA. Is there anything I can do for you?

LAUNZI. No, thank you, nothing. [*Pause.*] And you, Sisters—what are *you* doing here at night by the Danube?

HONORATA. We, my child, are waiting for the first boat to Teteny. We are going to the hospital there.

[*Pause.*]

FIRMINA [*to LOUIS*]. Was it you who did it?

LOUIS. Yes, please, Sister.

FIRMINA. You are a very brave man.

LOUIS. Thank you, Sister. It was a tough job. It's dark out there. Water's black. It helped that the young Missie's dress showed up so

white. [*With awe.*] She was all dressed as a bride.

DATIVA. A bride?

LAUNZI. He means that I was dressed in white.

LOUIS. She had flowers in her hair.

LAUNZI. That was for Death.

FIRMINA [*to LOUIS*]. You have done a Christian deed. Your reward shall be great.

LOUIS. I don't want any reward. Thank you kindly, Sister, all the same.

JEKI. How does it happen you were not fast asleep?

LOUIS. I was up, sir. I don't sleep very well, sir.

JEKI. Oh! So you don't sleep very well? How is that?

LOUIS. A bad conscience, I guess, sir.

ANTON. Hm—I shouldn't wonder.

DATIVA. Are you not cold, my child?

LAUNZI. No, Sister, I am quite warm.

DATIVA. Where did you get all these nice clothes?

LAUNZI. The skipper's wife, down there on the barge—they are hers. Oh, she was so kind to me!

[*Enter on right, in front, a Policeman, a fine type of Hungarian.*]

HONORATA. Well?

POLICEMAN. I spoke with her father. Poor gentleman was quite upset. He is hurrying into his clothes, and will be here in a minute. [*To LAUNZI.*] In five minutes he will be here, Miss.

HONORATA. Did you not speak with her dear mother?

POLICEMAN. No, only her father.

LAUNZI. That is the second time you have mentioned my mother. She is not in Budapest; she is in Paris.

LOUIS. That is a long way off.

LAUNZI. A long, long way. [*To POLICEMAN.*] My poor father—was he terribly frightened?

POLICEMAN. Well, to tell the truth, Miss, he's anxious about you. He is coming in an automobile.

LAUNZI. Even if he does come in an automobile, it isn't his own. [*Proudly.*] My father has no automobile. Honestly, honestly. [*Speaking to all.*] My father has no automobile of his own. He never had one. My father is a very poor man. He is a poor struggling musician.

ANTON. Well, if we cannot be of any further assistance here—the young lady seems to be all right—

JEKI. Yes, we might as well be going. Good-bye, my child. You may be thankful that things turned out so well for you.

LAUNZI. Oh, doctor, if you could only look into my heart! It was a cruel thing to force me back into life! But for your kindness, I thank you.

JEKI [*somewhat at a loss*]. Well, we leave you in good hands. The Sisters—[*Bowing.*—will look after you until your father comes. Good night.

ANTON. Good night.

[*They bow and exeunt at right.*]

LAUNZI [*to LOUIS*]. Please, what is your name?

LOUIS [*hesitating a moment*]. Louis.

LAUNZI. Louis what?

LOUIS. Louis nothing. Poor Louis—Come-Along Louis—Off-You-Go Louis—Hurry-Up-Louis—Dirty Louis—Louis the Dog.

LAUNZI. Oh, no. Good Louis—Brave Louis.

LOUIS. If you please, little Missie, I'd rather you didn't.

LAUNZI. Louis, my brother Louis.

LOUIS. If you please, Missie—don't take any notice of me. I'd rather you didn't.

LAUNZI. You did me a great wrong. Yet I love you. I love you all! [*In an ecstasy.*] What a brave, pitiful, honest, friendly world! Oh, I love you! [*Embracing all with a gesture.*] These tranquil nuns—this good-hearted policeman—the skipper and the skipper's wife—and Louis—all of you—How wonderful it would be if you would all come with me now, and we could all live together—all together so happily, in a great big house! [*Pointing to each of them in turn.*] You would have a room, and you would have a room—and you—and you—and you—[*To REDEMPTA.*] Only you would have none, for you would be with me—in the same room.

REDEMPTA. Gladly, my little child.

LAUNZI. You are so gentle—so beautiful—and so young. [*Impulsively.*] I want to ask you something.

REDEMPTA. Do so, my dear.

LAUNZI. May I?

REDEMPTA. Surely you may.

LAUNZI. Down there on the barge—they held the lamp so that it lit up your face—and in that light—I couldn't help noticing—you—you have a gold tooth, Sister.

REDEMPTA. I have, my dear.

LAUNZI. It—seems so funny somehow—a nun—don't be cross with me—a nun with a gold tooth!

REDEMPTA. It is a vanity. But it

has been there a long, long time. I was not born a nun.

HONORATA [*taking a seat beside LAUNZI*]. And now, there is something we should like to ask you, my child.

LAUNZI. I know.

HONORATA. What do you know?

LAUNZI. What you are going to ask me. You are going to ask me, why I jumped from the bridge into the Danube, aren't you?

HONORATA. Yes.

LAUNZI. And I must answer—unless I tell a lie—I must answer with a word—which perhaps I should not speak, dear Sisters, in your presence.

HONORATA. There is nothing you may not say to us.

LAUNZI. But that word—[*Timidly*].—love—

[*Pause.*]

HONORATA. Was it for—that—you tried to throw away your life, my child?

LAUNZI. I did throw it away! But he found it and brought it back to shore. Yes, it was for that I did it. Dear Sisters—you see, you see—it is like this: I am in love with a boy—and this boy— Oh, I have the most lovely, young, beautiful, queenly—friend! And this boy does not love me. It is my friend he loves. [*Caressingly.*] He loves her— Oh, why did you have to ask me that? Wasn't it enough that I wanted to die? And the strong, black Danube, how it swept me along! It clutched me, it did not want to let me go—how hungry it must have been!— It is my friend he loves. She is much more beautiful than I am. And this boy was struck in my presence—beaten, and *kicked*, before my eyes—and—[*With agony and shame.*].—be-

fore her eyes—and then he fought a duel, and he was cut with a sword by a big, strong, rich man!— Oh, I thought of that till there was nothing in me but that thought—and to kill that thought I had to kill myself!

REDEMPTA. Hush, dear, try to be calm.

HONORATA. Poor little girl—and her mother way, way off in Paris.

LAUNZI. But I wanted her to be in Paris! Three whole days I waited till she was safe away in Paris! Oh, I have counted the days as I used to count the days till my birthday! I have counted the nights: three more nights to sleep—two more nights to sleep—one more night to sleep—and then—to sleep through eternity.

REDEMPTA. You must try to be calm.

LAUNZI. At midnight—on the stroke of twelve—I stole from my bed—my father was fast asleep. I kissed the knob of his bedroom door, which his hand so often had touched. That was how I said farewell to him. That was how I left him forever.

[*The flash of an electric lamp now illumines the ground in front of them. On the right, in front of them, from a distance, the headlights of a motor-car light up first the center of the stage, and then the small group of persons. The light grows stronger and stronger, as the car approaches.*]

FIRMINA. What a bright light!

[*From the distance may be heard indistinctly the deep tone of an automobile horn.*]

LOUIS. That's an automobile coming!

[*The light becomes still more*

brilliant, lighting up the whole group with radiance.]

LAUNZI [*rises—shouts*]. It's my father! It's my father!

[*The light becomes still stronger.*]

POLICEMAN [*advances a few steps in the direction of the light, then stops and raises his hand*]. Stop! Here we are!

[*The light shows that the automobile has stopped quite close to the stage, in front on the right. Until the car goes away, the strong headlights illumine the whole group. Enter hastily on the right, IVAN, followed by PROFESSOR BARODY.*]

IVAN. Launzi!

[*Takes her in his arms.*]

POLICEMAN. No harm done, sir. Don't work yourself up. Here we all are. Here we are, and here we've been for some time. Everything's fine, sir. All's well that ends well. Don't you worry.

LAUNZI. Father, I'm alive! Here I am! Look at me! I'm laughing! I'm breathing! Kiss me! [IVAN *embraces and kisses her passionately.*] And now—now kiss him! [LOOKS in the direction of LOUIS.] Look, father, how wet and dripping he is! His name is Louis!

IVAN. Are you the man who—? Was it you who—?

[LOUIS *tries to sidle out on right.*]

POLICEMAN. Here! Where are you going?

[LOUIS *stops.*]

LAUNZI. Yes, it was he, father. It was he who did it.

POLICEMAN. By himself.

IVAN. It was you who—?

LOUIS. Aw—I didn't do anything, sir.

[*Again tries to slip out.*]

POLICEMAN. Hey! Come back here! [LOUIS *stands still.*] Say, you, what do you mean by slipping off like that, just when the gentleman is preparing to express his gratitude?

IVAN. Yes—my gratitude—I—oh, my God! My little girl!—I am still—so at a loss—I can't take it in—[LOOKS around him.] Darling, the nice professor is here, too. You know him, don't you? He came to see us yesterday—you remember?—and talked with you. Professor Barody.

LAUNZI. Professor Barody. The alienist.

IVAN [*uneasily*]. Yes—yes, darling.

LAUNZI. Who minutely examined my immortal soul.

BARODY. And who helped you. Or at least, tried to help you.

LAUNZI. Ah, yes—who tried to help me. Father, whose car is that?

IVAN. It belongs to Professor Barody.

LAUNZI [*to everybody, triumphantly*]. Didn't I tell you so? My father is a poor man! He has no automobile!

IVAN. Darling—shall we go home now?

LAUNZI. Oh, yes—but wait—just one minute. I want to ask her something—[GOES to REDEMPTA.] You—would you come with me?

REDEMPTA. Would I—where, my child?

LAUNZI [*in great agitation*]. With me! Now! This minute! And stay with me—a long time—always—forever! Oh, I beseech you, by the love of the holy blessed Virgin, don't say that you will not come with me!

[REDEMPTA *looks at the other*

nuns. *They all nod consentingly.*

HONORATA. Our Lord Jesus Christ has said: To all those who ask of thee, give.

REDEMPTA. I will come with you.

LAUNZI [*impatiently*]. Now? This minute? This very minute?

REDEMPTA. Yes.

BARODY [*to REDEMPTA*]. You will be needed. I am most anxious about the child.

REDEMPTA. Come, dear, we will go home now. And to-morrow we will send for your mother.

LAUNZI [*shrieking*]. Oh, *no!*

REDEMPTA. Hush, hush! You must control yourself. You must be a good little girl. You have passed through a dreadful ordeal. But that's all past and done with. You are going to be all right now.

LAUNZI [*as if in a reverie*]. Oh, dear me, no! I shall do it again.

BARODY. Tut, tut, Launzi!

LAUNZI [*looking at BARODY*]. Tut, tut, Launzi! Tut, tut, Launzi!—I die—and he says “tut, tut!”

IVAN [*suddenly losing his composure, in an outburst of despair*]. My child, my child, how could you have done such a thing? Why *did* you do it?

BARODY [*quickly to IVAN*]. Ah—I must beg of you—

LAUNZI [*agitatedly, in a loud voice*]. I'll tell you why I did it! I did it because I wanted him to see me dead! Dead for his sake! Dead for love! I wanted him to see me on my bier, daddy, and fall in love with me!—I wrote two letters—one for you—it's on your piano; the other for him. I went to his house and slipped it under his door. And in that letter I said that to-morrow my

body would be found in the river, and that when I had been laid on my bier, he was to come and look on me, since it was for love of him that I had died. Do you realize, father, that he may be reading it now? And here I am alive! Don't you pity me for being alive, with this misery and shame? Father, honestly, honestly, I tried so to die for his sake!—I jumped from the highest bridge, on a dark, dark night, when not a soul was looking, into the inky Danube! [*In a choking voice, in utter despair.*] And nothing is to come of it! Nothing is to come of it all!

REDEMPTA. Try to be calm, dear child.

LAUNZI. He will never see me—lying on my bier—white and speechless—though all I did I did for that one moment—that one moment between him and me!

IVAN. Oh, my darling—come home! Come home!

LAUNZI. Father, I now demand it of you!

IVAN. My dear child—I don't understand—what do you demand of me?

LAUNZI. That Imre shall find me dead—alive but dead—in white with flowers and burning candles. Grant me this or I shall not leave here!

IVAN. I don't understand you, darling.

LAUNZI. If you refuse me I'll—

BARODY. He will do as you wish. [*To IVAN.*] You must not refuse her.

IVAN. But what? What do you want me to do, darling?

LAUNZI [*in great excitement*]. If you don't do it, I'll be off and kill myself— I'll succeed the next time. Then you'll have to lay me on a bier,

amid candles and flowers in blue, silver and white and that boy will come and see me—and cry—and tremble—and love me.

BARODY. We will do it.

LAUNZI. All blue and silver—candles burning—

IVAN [*heartbroken*]. Yes, yes, my darling.

LAUNZI. To-morrow? He shall find me when he comes to-morrow?

IVAN. Yes, to-morrow.

LAUNZI. Swear? **BURLINGAME**

BARODY. Yes. **PUBLIC**

IVAN. I swear!

LAUNZI. Here before witnesses—before these sacred women—you have sworn to do it.

IVAN [*with bent head, weeping*]. I will do it.

LAUNZI [*going to him and putting head on his shoulder*]. You are my darling father—my poor, dear, crushed father.

IVAN. Darling—my darling—calm yourself—come home!

[*He leads her away accompanied by BARODY and at the door exit she turns.*]

LAUNZI. Sister! Sister Redempta!—Oh, I suppose she's saying good-bye.

REDEMPTA [*who is standing with the other nuns, speaking to them*]. I am not going to the place I started for. But I am being sent by our Lord Jesus Christ. This morning I was waiting for a boat to Teteny. But we know not the end of our journey: that is known only to Jesus.

HONORATA. His Holy Name be praised!

NUNS. For ever and ever, Amen!

[LAUNZI, REDEMPTA, IVAN and BARODY go off together into the flood of light. The

POLICEMAN and LOUIS have watched the whole scene from the background. Now the light of the car is withdrawn, indicating that the car is turning around and going away. While this is going on, there is a short pause, all looking after the disappearing car. Then the three nuns who remain, sit down together on the seat and silently read their breviaries.]

POLICEMAN [*comes forward, beckons to LOUIS to follow him. He goes and stands under the electric lamp, and takes out his notebook and pencil*]. You, my good fellow, have to get a big reward from the State, namely, as having saved a life. A certain amount of cash, and—in pre-war times, that is—a real silver medal, too, order of merit, lowest class.

LOUIS [*eagerly*]. Oh, please, sir, just let me go away.

POLICEMAN. Out of the question, my man. You have imperiled your life, as provided by law, and the State wants your name and address. Now then—your name?

LOUIS. Louis.

POLICEMAN. Louis what?

LOUIS. Louis nothing. . . . Louis the Dog.

POLICEMAN [*to the NUNS*]. Did you get that? [*The NUNS look smilingly at him.*] Look here, now, if you defy the authorities, I shall have to put you under arrest.

LOUIS [*imploringly*]. Oh, please let me go!

POLICEMAN [*sternly*]. Well, then, what's your name?

LOUIS [*in despair*]. My name—it's not Louis, sergeant, it's only here that I go by the name of Louis.

POLICEMAN. Well, if it's not Louis, then what is it?

LOUIS [*frantic*]. Oh, sir, please don't make me tell my name! Can't you leave me alone, sergeant? Let me go—can't you?

POLICEMAN [*suspiciously—taking him by the collar*]. See here. What's the matter with you, anyway?

LOUIS. I'm a runaway. I've been locked up. I've been in prison. I'm not allowed in Budapest.

POLICEMAN. What's your occupation?

LOUIS. That's what I was locked up for. Poaching, sir. Please let me go!

POLICEMAN [*in astonishment*]. Ho—ho—sir.

LOUIS. But since that time, I haven't been fishing at all— I swear to you I haven't.

POLICEMAN. Then what have you been doing?

LOUIS. Washing the barge. Bringing beer for the stevedores. I haven't caught a fish. [*Bitterly.*] The only thing I've caught is a drowning lady; and I'll never hear the last of it.

POLICEMAN. Well, I'll be—

LOUIS. I've been living here so quiet and peaceful—not a soul that knows me—everything smooth and ship-shape—but I'm done for now. You'll send in my name, and I'll be deported.

POLICEMAN. Well, what the hell am I going to do with you?

LOUIS. You might—you might—sort of—look the other way a minute, sergeant.

POLICEMAN. To give you a chance to make yourself scarce?

LOUIS. Yes, sir.

[*The POLICEMAN is at a loss. He turns and looks at the NUNS as if asking their advice and nods to them inquiringly.*]

HONORATA [*smiling*]. Look the other way.

[*POLICEMAN nods inquiringly at FIRMINA.*]

FIRMINA [*smiling*]. Look the other way.

[*POLICEMAN nods towards DATIVA.*]

DATIVA [*smiling*]. Look the other way!

[*POLICEMAN looks at LOUIS, thoughtfully spits on the floor, then, turning round in military fashion, turns his back on LOUIS, shaking his head. LOUIS, overcome with gratitude, kisses his hands to the NUNS, then steals off very quickly on right. POLICEMAN turns again toward the NUNS, salutes in military fashion, turns toward left and moves off. The NUNS nod pleasantly after him. Their white caps bob up and down gently. It is beginning to get light. In the distance the siren of a ship is heard.*]

CURTAIN

ACT FOUR

[*SCENE: Large room in IVAN's apartment, draped with dark blue cloth, in the manner practiced by undertakers in draping rooms for the*

funeral of young Roman Catholic girls. On the left, in front, a slit in the cloth, presumably because there is a door behind; the slit can be used

to enter and leave the room. On the right, in the center, the opening of a double door decorated with drapery. This door is continually open, and leads to the next room. There is no furniture in the room. The ceiling is dark. The carpet on the floor is blue.

In the center of the stage a high, pompous catafalque, on a dais some four to five steps in height, draped in blue. There are steps draped in blue leading up to the catafalque on all sides. At the corners, below, dwarf evergreens. On the left, at the head of the coffin, two very tall candelabra, the burning candles of which rise high above the coffin. At the foot of the coffin, a few wreaths with dark but colored ribbons. Flowers strewn over the steps. An open coffin, in blue, white and gold, with high pillows and rich decorations of lace. The top of the dais, on which the coffin rests, is broad enough to permit of people standing on it, beside the coffin. The room is immersed in dark blue. The coffin glitters and glances in the bright light of the candelabra.

When the curtain rises, the stage is empty. All that is to be seen is: the yellow flames burning in the dim blue light, and the brilliantly lighted coffin. From the neighboring room on the right, through the open door, LAUNZI may be heard singing a sad song. Her father is accompanying her on the piano. Long pause. Only the sound of the singing can be heard. REDEMPTA enters slowly on the right, stands motionless and gazes at the catafalque. After she stands and gazes like this for a while, the singing ceases and the music dies away.

IVAN enters on the right, and stands silent for a moment.]

REDEMPTA [*in a low voice*]. What is she doing now?

IVAN. Still sitting at the piano.

REDEMPTA. We'd better leave her alone.

IVAN. When she was a little child, she used to sit like that—just like that—by the piano, while I played. I never thought then that my playing would one day be used—to—to calm her.

REDEMPTA. Calm her? This is not calm, this silence—this hush before—before such awful things! What we are doing is a sin!

IVAN. I promised her. And the doctor has approved. It is the last experiment.

REDEMPTA. Other doctors, too, should have been consulted. Just because the poor girl has a whim to—

IVAN. Alas, Sister, this is something more than a whim. For whims like this, in the Middle Ages, girls were either burned alive, or looked upon as saints and the objects of pilgrimages. Medical science is helpless. And I am at the end of my strength. That—that—[*Points to the bier.*—it was so hard to make them see—they didn't want to let me have it—I had to explain—to so many people—oh—

[*He puts his hand to his head.*]

REDEMPTA. No good will come of playing with death.

IVAN. It is not we who are playing. This is her game, poor little girl.

REDEMPTA. It is a wicked game.

IVAN. Not if it helps her, Sister. Don't be afraid. You have been

present at operations much more severe than this in the hospital, I am sure, without being afraid. It is the same thing. Just remember that you are helping a doctor, and you'll feel different about it. We are trying to heal her wounded little soul—that's all—by humoring her—by letting her have her way— Oh, don't leave her, Sister!

REDEMPTA. Certainly I shall not leave her.

IVAN. Oh, thank you! Thank you! I can never thank you enough!—Ah—she's coming!

[*They retire toward left. Enter LAUNZI on right walking lightly as if on tiptoe. Her eyes glitter with ecstasy and she smiles happily, as she raises her arms toward the pageant before her. She is wearing a flowing, wide-sleeved white robe reaching to the floor. In her hair, a small white bouquet. In her hand, a small book. She begins to speak in a low voice and a tone of happiness.*]

LAUNZI. Just like a Christmas tree! How beautiful! How solemn! How coldly it burns! It glitters, but does not speak. It is holy—holy—[*Catches sight of her father.*] Father. Thank you.

IVAN. Darling—

LAUNZI. Father, if you had not kept your promise, do you know what I was going to do? . . .

IVAN. Don't let's talk about that, darling. You see, I did keep my promise.

LAUNZI. I see. How strange that I see. One does not usually see this.

IVAN. Darling, don't let's talk about it.

LAUNZI. Just like a Christmas tree! All trimmed behind closed doors, to keep the child from seeing, until the candles are lit. [*Looks smilingly at her father.*] Mother knows everything. She told me I could wind you around my finger.

IVAN. It is because I love you so, my dear.

LAUNZI. Goodness, it must have cost you a fortune. It looks frightfully expensive. And you to work so hard for every penny—you are so poor. But you can pay for it with the money you have been putting aside for my dowry. This shall be my wedding. [*Pause.*] What time is it, father?

IVAN. Nearly five o'clock, my child.

LAUNZI. Did you speak with him yourself?

IVAN. Yes, dear. Over the telephone. He called me up this morning, after reading your letter. And I spoke with him myself.

LAUNZI. Did he seem—at all—upset?

IVAN. He was in despair.

LAUNZI [*suspiciously*]. Sure you didn't—give anything away?

IVAN. No, darling. I did exactly as I promised. With my gray head I lied to him exactly as I promised.

LAUNZI. Then he really believes that I am dead?

IVAN. He does.

LAUNZI. And he's coming here?

IVAN. He is. At five o'clock.

LAUNZI. How patient you are, father. This is at least the tenth time you have told me that to-day. Word for word. [*Looks at bier.*] And thanks be to Thee, my God, that things are happening as they are. [*Moves toward bier, and stops just in*

front of steps.] Sister Redempta found your little Bible—and she told me that—I should seek consolation therein— But I have been naughty. I didn't read what Sister Redempta told me to. Guess what I read—the Song of Solomon! [*Opens book and reads aloud in a solemn manner, by the light of the candles.*] “I charge you, O Daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.” [*She closes the book, mounts the steps, goes behind the bier, a transfigured smile on her face. Again she opens the Bible, reads a passage, then closes it, sits down on the edge of the coffin, as if it were a bed, and in this position continues.*] “For love is stronger than death and hard as the coffin, burning love!”

[*Gazes into space and is silent.*

REDEMPTA *advances terrified.*]

IVAN [*following her, soothingly.*]
Sister—

REDEMPTA. It is too much for me—I shall get used to it! I shall get used to it! But it is hard. I will pray for her.

LAUNZI [*looking at the decorations on the bier.*] Beautiful lace, lovely flowers! Don't be afraid, you lovely flowers; you are not going under the ground: you are going to a wedding. [*Looks about her and is silent a moment.*] Now the bride is waiting for the bridegroom. [*Pause.*] Daddy! You're not weeping down there? That *would* be silly!

IVAN. No, my child. I am not weeping.

LAUNZI. Dear Sister—don't shut me out of your heart for this—you're not weeping, either, are you?

REDEMPTA. I am not weeping.

LAUNZI. What a good father—to

give his child a present like this. Father, I must be very unhappy for you to have done this for me. [*He does not reply. Pause.*] Silence reigns supreme—not a voice to be heard—the bride awaits the bridegroom. [*Silence. Without, a ring at the bell.*] Go away quickly, both of you!—no, wait! Help me arrange myself! [*To REDEMPTA, who cannot bring herself to do it.*] You must!—Am I all right? Oh, I would like to be beautiful—beautiful! It has come—it is my moment—hush—hush—

[IVAN and REDEMPTA go out on the right. LAUNZI lies still in the coffin; the two tall candelabra shine brightly on her head, face and upper body. She smiles and closes her eyes. Enter IMRE on right, slowly and timidly. He is serious and deeply moved. He is wearing a dark suit. On his forehead a narrow silk bandage, the souvenir of a duel. In his hand a small bunch of asters. For a while he gazes at the catafalque with astonishment and reverent awe, while approaching it gradually. He lays the bunch of flowers at the foot of the catafalque, on the lowest step, then stands speechless, with bowed head and clasped hands as if in prayer. LAUNZI, after a short pause, begins to sob very softly and in a muffled tone, like one desirous of restraining tears but unable to do so. IMRE hears the sound, looks around the room, but not up at the bier. LAUNZI's sobbing becomes louder. IMRE timidly looks in her direction, now practically

certain that the sobbing comes from the bier.]

IMRE. Some one is weeping.

[Moves slowly a step toward the door on the right, not taking his eyes from the coffin.]

IVAN *[enters on right on tiptoe and steals up to IMRE]*. My dear boy—

IMRE *[in a whisper]*. It sounds as if—some one were weeping—

[Weeping continues.]

IVAN *[putting his arm about IMRE's shoulder]*. I hear it, my boy. And I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to come in and tell you. Don't be afraid. It is only my poor little girl, crying, up there. She is not dead. They rescued her. But she made me promise her—for your sake—oh, how can I explain it to you?—There is nothing the matter with her little body—but I fear that what is happening here—is worse—than if she had really died.

IMRE *[who during the last speech has been gazing steadfastly at LAUNZI, now addresses her in a low voice]*. Launzi!—*[IVAN goes out. LAUNZI slowly and wearily raises herself in the coffin. IMRE, astonished, gently.]* Launzi, dear—

LAUNZI *[petulantly]*. Oh, you made me cry. I couldn't keep it back. Or did I do it purposely? I really don't know. How silly of me!

IMRE. Launzi, dear—why did you do this?

LAUNZI. No, really—what an unimaginative question! Didn't you read my letter?

IMRE. Yes.

LAUNZI. Well, then. I wrote you that I was going to die, and asked you to come and see me on my bier. But they wouldn't let me die. And so I do you still fail to understand?

IMRE. No— I understand.

LAUNZI *[frightened]*. Are you afraid of me?

IMRE. No.

LAUNZI *[her voice rising suddenly in volume]*. On the bridge I shrieked your name! And I kept on saying your name—all the time—Imre! Imre! Imre!—until the water choked my voice in my throat!

IMRE. Launzi!—

LAUNZI. Don't be afraid of me! You're afraid of me!

[She is frightened and troubled.]

IMRE. I don't recognize you—you speak so—differently—so strangely.

LAUNZI. Why don't you say that I must be ill? That's what they usually say. Your forehead is bandaged.

IMRE. Yes.

LAUNZI. You were wounded by him?

IMRE. Yes.

LAUNZI. But not for my sake. *[IMRE bows his head. At the top of her voice.]* Answer me!

IMRE. No.

LAUNZI. He struck you—I saw him. He risked you. And he made a wound in your head with a sharp iron sword.

IMRE. I am so ashamed of that.

LAUNZI. I suppose so. But it made me love you all the more. I am not a woman yet. Women love the man who strikes. But I love the one who feels the blow.

IMRE. You were always so good to me—Launzi—

LAUNZI *[in a loud voice]*. I was always in love with you! Only I didn't tell you so. My love was not the kind that could be told leaning on the piano, while Chopin is being

played. My love can only be told at night, drowning in the Danube.

IMRE [*bitterly*]. Why did you do it, Launzi? Why?

LAUNZI. Oh, come—why be so gloomy? A boy of twenty for whose sake a girl commits suicide! You ought to be proud! You ought to go swaggering about all over town, telling about it and laughing!

IMRE. If I had only known—but I hadn't the faintest idea—if you had only told me—

LAUNZI. Told you? Made a declaration? Would you like a formal declaration of love? All right—you can have one. But none of your leaning-on-the-piano ones! None of your "Do you know, I rather like you, Imre,"—or, "Imre, call me up to-morrow." You want a declaration of love? Mine?

IMRE. I always knew that—

LAUNZI. What did you know? Did you know that I wanted to escape from the sickening filth—to you? Because you were pure? That's the kind of thing men usually say to girls. But I have earned the right to say these things to you, because I have died for you—you virgin boy, untouched by women or cards or smoke or wine or money! Do you understand me? Are you sure you understand me? Because, you see, nobody understands me! Indeed, nobody ever asks me any questions!

IMRE [*crushed*]. My poor darling.

LAUNZI. From this wretched filth I stretch out two thin arms to you! Listen—when I was a child—only this spring—I used to hope I'd never have any children. But when I walked out upon the bridge, to die for you, there was one thing, and only one thing, I regretted: that I

should never be able to bear you a child.

IMRE. My dear—little friend. [*Approaches the catafalque. LAUNZI sinks back on the pillows*]. My sweet little—if I had known—

LAUNZI [*wearily*]. Now you must leave me to myself for a while. I am thinking of my mother. [IMRE, *just about to ascend the lowest step, at these words stops and covers his face*.] My beautiful, young mother—went to Paris—out of my way. Now it is evening. She is just dressing to go to the theatre. My mother wishes to forget. She has a gold dress—pure gold—that is the fashion now. How white her shoulders are. Her back is like marble. In Paris, in the evening, the streets are ablaze with light. In the car an electric light is burning. An evening gown—and a dinner suit. In Paris the streets are aflame. They are laughing in the car.

IMRE. Oh—my shattered life—

LAUNZI. You were beaten for her sake—wounded for her sake—yet you love her.

IMRE. Oh, God—oh, my little friend—don't let's suffer so—let's stop this—I beseech you!

LAUNZI [*sitting up in the coffin*]. And you ought to love her, too, for her little finger is worth more than all the women in the world! Why, if you could only love her as I do!

IMRE [*in a loud voice*]. Oh, no, no! I don't want—

LAUNZI [*bending forward and listening attentively*]. What don't you want?

IMRE. I don't want her! I never want to see her again! I want some one else!

LAUNZI. How dare you say that!

IMRE. Come down from there! Come here!

LAUNZI. Why do you call me?

IMRE. Come—to me—here—

LAUNZI [*trembling*]. Tell me again what you said just now: You don't want—

IMRE. I don't want *her*! I never want to see her any more.

LAUNZI [*rises and stands beside the coffin; at the top of her voice*]. Then who is it that you want?

IMRE. You! You wonderful girl! [*Leaps onto the lowest step.*] I am coming up for you!

LAUNZI. No—no— Ah, what a heavenly moment—I will go down for you. How sad that I must descend from the abode of truth into the land of lies. I must move slowly—for my great love has exhausted me.

IMRE [*ardently*]. My darling—my beautiful child—come here—here—to me!

LAUNZI [*descending the steps*]. Keep on lying. Don't stop in the middle. Who is it you love?

IMRE. My beautiful, beautiful angel!

LAUNZI. Me?

IMRE. It is you that I want to love! You!

LAUNZI. Me?

IMRE. Only you! [LAUNZI *descends, transfigured, smiling with a pained smile. When on the lower step she pauses, facing IMRE. IMRE kneels at her feet and looks up at her.*] Your descent was like that of some miracle from an ancient altar-screen.

LAUNZI [*staggering*]. I feel so faint— [IMRE *rises, stands with one foot on the step, puts his arm around her, leads her down, and embraces*

her tenderly. Resting on IMRE's breast and leaning her head on his shoulder.] Sweet lies! So painful—and so sweet.

IMRE. I am not lying!

LAUNZI. I can feel the blood beating in your neck. How quick your pulse is—and wild!

IMRE. We will go away somewhere together—

LAUNZI. How your face burns!

IMRE. I am blazing! I am burning up! And nothing can hurt me!

LAUNZI. In a minute, that will all be gone. And then it will hurt. With me it did not last even a minute, and it is hurting me already.

IMRE. I want to forget everything, and go away somewhere with you!

LAUNZI. You are talking in your sleep—but you will wake, poor boy.

IMRE. Why do you say that?

LAUNZI. Oh, hold me close to you! There is somebody here between us! Drive her out from here—with all your strength—press me close to you! And quickly, quickly begin to lie again. Lie to me that you have forgotten her fragrance! For I can smell it! Can't you smell it, too? You know you do! Oh, say it! Say it! Say it!

IMRE. What do you want me to say?

LAUNZI. That you belong to her!

IMRE. You know—you have always known—

LAUNZI. That you belong to her.

IMRE. It will be the death of me.

LAUNZI. You can never forget her

IMRE. I want to!

LAUNZI. You never will.

IMRE. No.

LAUNZI. You don't even want to.

IMRE. Yes, yes, I do! Oh, come away! Oh, let us hide somewhere!

LAUNZI. Don't say anything more. Don't be nice to me any more. Hurt me, so that I may come to hate you! Help me! Save me from you!

IMRE. But I want so to love you!

LAUNZI. You haven't the strength to love me. Help me! Be cruel to me! Tell me with pride and without pity that you love somebody else! Somebody more fascinating! More grown up! Tell me you worship her!

IMRE [*at the top of his voice*]. I worship her! And don't look at me any more! Don't let me lie! You can see how I am writhing and bleeding! I am destroyed with love for her! Her memory burns me! It burns me! It eats my flesh—!

LAUNZI. Keep on talking! Keep on talking! Don't let me speak!

IMRE. Launzi—Launzi!

LAUNZI [*screaming*]. Don't let me speak! Shout! Keep on talking! Yell!

IMRE. Launzi, dear!

LAUNZI. Drown my voice! Don't let me say anything more, I tell you! Roar! Roar! Tell me that you love her better now than ever! Tell me that all I have done was silly and useless, for you worship her more now than you did when you came in! I implore you, don't let me speak!

IMRE. Launzi—for heaven's sake—

LAUNZI. Louder! Don't let me speak! Don't let me say it! I *must not say it*. Here in my father's house—in my poor forsaken father's house—it's something he must not hear—and you must not hear—it's something that nobody in the world must hear—oh, keep me from saying it! Oh, stop me, all of you. [*She staggers, and leans against IMRE, who*

supports her. Pause. Weakly, but calmly.] Oh, how tired I am. Imre—take me back up there. [*She leans lovingly on his arm, and it is rather she who leads IMRE to the steps of the catafalque. There she pauses and, letting go of him, mounts the first step.*] Here our ways part.

IMRE. Launzi, dear—

LAUNZI. You are a living being. [*IMRE approaches her. LAUNZI, clasping her hands.*] I am so cold. Let me touch you. [*Stretches down her hand to IMRE, who seizes it.*] Your hand! [*He kisses her hand.*] Your mouth! [*Withdraws her hand and strokes his hair.*] Your hair!

IMRE. Launzi!

LAUNZI. Go, my heart. You know, don't you, that you must now go away forever? [*She mounts slowly and sits on bier.*] You will go away, leave town, won't you?—to study—in a foreign country—abroad—

IMRE [*in a reverie*]. Abroad—

LAUNZI. You are young, and alive.

IMRE. I am alive.

LAUNZI. Go, Imre. Just go. Don't say good-bye. [*IMRE goes out slowly on right. Looking after him. REDEMPTA enters on right. In her hand she carries a tray, with a glass of milk and a roll.*] Sister, dear, let's laugh. I will tell you a joke, Sister. One day last summer he drew a flower in the sand with his stick. For eleven days I watered that flower, to keep the wind from sweeping it away. And then came that big storm. I must laugh about it, though. I mustn't get sentimental. [*She laughs aloud.*] Why aren't you laughing, Sister? [*Short pause. IVAN enters on right.*] Now, father, we will never speak of him again. Father, play me that thing of Chopin

—play it very beautifully—and for a long time. Play it forever.

[*She sinks back on the pillows.*]

IVAN. Yes, dear.

LAUNZI [*to REDEMPTA*]. What's that you've got there?

REDEMPTA. Just a little milk.

LAUNZI. I'm not coming down from here, Sister.

REDEMPTA. You must drink it.

LAUNZI. I'm not coming down from here any more.

REDEMPTA. Then I'll bring it up to you. [*Goes up and stands behind bier with milk.*] Now here's a nice little glass of milk, and you must drink it.

LAUNZI. Why this sophistry? Nice little glass! You know perfectly well it's a big glass! It's a horrid, big glass!

REDEMPTA. You must drink it, dear.

LAUNZI [*sitting up, takes the milk and begins to drink it*]. You just can't bear to see me taking my afternoon tea on a bier, can you?

REDEMPTA. The main thing is that you should drink it. [LAUNZI *finishes milk.*] Eat the roll, dear.

LAUNZI. Don't want it, thanks. [*Returns the glass. REDEMPTA descends with the tray and goes out on right. From without a piano is heard, sweetly and softly. REDEMPTA enters. In the following scene LAUNZI speaks in broken sentences, stopping between the several sentences and even words to listen rapturously to the music.*] I shall have my hair cut off—clipped to the roots— Is it evening outside now?

REDEMPTA. It will be very soon, dear.

LAUNZI. Ever been to Paris, Sister?

REDEMPTA. No.

LAUNZI. In Paris, they say, there is a statue of Joan of Arc that is all plated over with pure gold. She is riding her horse like a man. If I were Joan of Arc, I should dress all in iron, and with my single sword cut down this hateful world. But I am only Launzi Ivan. I am a girl. Missie, they call me. I shall marry an old man. A general. A protestant Bishop. Sister, dear, are you cross with me for suffering in this ghastly way?

REDEMPTA. Oh, my dear little child—

LAUNZI [*crying out in anguish*]. People ought to take morphine—to keep them from thinking of anything!

REDEMPTA. You mustn't talk like that.

LAUNZI. Or cocaine. That's a good remedy against life. One ought to busy oneself intensively with something—driving an engine, that would keep you busy—but I don't imagine they'd let me do that. Astronomy—that would do—plenty of reckoning and figures. Oh, how I suffer! The skipper's wife got her clothes back, didn't she—those she lent me?

REDEMPTA. We sent them back, dear.

LAUNZI. One ought to learn Russian. No, that's not difficult enough. Japanese. [*Short pause. Music continues. LAUNZI is suddenly seized with great mental agitation.*] Dear—dear Sister—I'm too weak, am I not, to be a mother?

REDEMPTA. Hush—calm yourself.

LAUNZI [*in extreme agitation*]. I ought to adopt a little child—Father! [*Sits up.*] Father! [*Louder.*] To adopt—a little or-

phan from the country! Father!

[*The words are spoken in a choking, sobbing voice, though not whiningly. Music suddenly ceases. IVAN enters on right.*]

REDEMPTEA [*at the last loud cry has hurried toward the catafalque in agony and mounted one or two steps of the dais*]. I think—really—a doctor—ought to be sent for!

[*These words are spoken in a whisper to IVAN, who is coming up the steps.*]

IVAN [*in a whisper*]. Barody is here—he's waiting—but he says it's better for her to—

LAUNZI. Will you stop that whispering! Get down from here! Leave me alone! I know it is impossible! Oh, don't answer! And don't ask me any questions! [*Sinks back on pillows. In a tone of resignation.*] It is impossible. [*Pause.*] I am dead, father.

[*REDEMPTEA comes down from the dais.*]

IVAN. Darling—darling—you shall come with me—to the country—to a pleasant, quiet village—to my mother's house—where your father spent his childhood.

LAUNZI. Childhood—I had a childhood, too.

IVAN. It will be so nice there.

LAUNZI. It is nice here, father; for I am dead.

IVAN [*timidly*]. Launzi—now that—it's all over—don't you think you'd better— Darling, let father lift you down from here—

LAUNZI. I shall do nothing of the kind.

IVAN. Why not, darling?

LAUNZI. I am never going down from here. I am never going back

to life. I have had enough. My mother doesn't know that I am dead. Louis doesn't know, either. Poor Louis—all for nothing! Pray for me, Sister! Pray for my poor little Budapest soul! [*Rises, in a loud voice.*] While I lived, I suffered! Wings! I want wings! Give me angel's wings! My wings, father! I want to fly! To soar! White, swan wings, will you help me fly up and complain to Jesus? Complain, complain to my heart's content, complain my heart out, tell him all my trouble! [*She mounts two steps, then pauses.*] I am going home! Home from my exile! [*From the distance may be heard the sound of trumpets playing softly and solemnly.*] I hear the angels' trumpets! [*Goes slowly upwards, as far as the head of the bier.*] I see the hundreds of thousands of angels! I hear the sweep of their wings! As if a hundred thousand swans were flying up there in the sky! [*Soft sound of trumpets.*] Oh, you can't hear it—but I can hear it! [*From far off may be heard the singing of the angelic chorus chanting a psalm of joy.*] They are singing. And now I am going to my gracious Redeemer, to Thee, sweet Jesus, my heavenly Advocate, who will redeem my debts! [*At the top of her voice.*] Oh, my soul faints with this extreme desire! No one can count the angels! [*The angelic chorus sounds ever louder and louder.*] I go to complain to Thee, to Thee, who sorrowed in Gethsemane, who suffered on the cross, whose holy body hung on Thy wounds, who was crucified with thieves, O Man of Galilee! I go to complain to Thee, only to Thee—but to Thee I shall tell everything!

[*She stands at the head of the bier, erect, with her eyes turned heavenwards, her arms raised on high, with the light of the candelabra shining full on her. She stops. The pow-*

erful angelic chorus, which she hears in a vision, now sings loud in ringing tones of jubilation overpowering all else.]

CURTAIN

ACT FIVE

[*SCENE: Very simple turret-room in the country house of IVAN's mother, situated among the hills.*

It is December, just before Christmas. On the left, in front, a small door. On the right, a door. In the left corner of the room a very large window almost suitable for a studio, overlooking the snow-covered mountains. In front of the window, in the center of the room, a large plain table full of papers and music. In the right corner, a piano with an electric lamp fitted upon it. From the ceiling there hangs a very powerful electric lamp, with a green shade, suspended on a single wire. There are five chairs in the room; all are without backs. When the curtain rises, IVAN is sitting at the large table, his back to the window, and working with large spectacles on. MRS. IVAN, the grandmother of LAUNZI, is sitting beside the piano and sewing by the light of the piano lamp. It is evening; through the large window may be seen a bright, snowy, lovely December evening.

IVAN, after a short pause, gets up, goes to the piano, tries two or three chords without sitting down, then returns to the table and scores the same.]

MADAME IVAN. Aren't you nearly finished with that, Estavan?

[*Pause.*]

IVAN [*looking up suddenly*]. Did you speak to me, mother? Forgive me—I— Didn't you ask me a question just now?

MADAME IVAN. I did, my son. I was wondering how much longer that was going to take you.

IVAN. Oh, about a week. It's hard to tell, exactly. A week or ten days.

MADAME IVAN. You'll work yourself to death. All day long and half the night, slaving away up here in this attic.

IVAN. Attic! Why, mother, this is much the nicest room in the house. [*Goes to window and looks out.*] From this high window you get the whole sweep of those beautiful snowy mountains. [*Looks down.*] And it's so quiet. I see people talking together in the road, but I can hardly hear their voices. [*Turns back from window.*] This was always my favorite room. How I loved it, when I was a child! This was the first piano I ever played. Do you remember?

MADAME IVAN. I wish you'd play it now, instead of ruining your eyes writing all those tiny notes. And by artificial light, too!

IVAN. If you only knew how grateful I am, mother, that I got this scoring to do. It is such hard work, such good, hard work. In these past four months since I brought my little

girl here, the only hours I have lived at all, have been those spent in writing down these tiny notes. In great sadness there is only one consolation, only one comfort—and that is work.

MADAME IVAN. How time flies! It's four months already since you brought her here.

IVAN. And all for nothing! All the doctors said it was sure to help her. Simple country food was going to help her. Rest was going to help her. Rest! What's the use of that! We've had plenty of that!

MADAME IVAN. "Have had" is right. After to-night there won't be any rest for anybody. Even that will be gone.

IVAN. It's not her fault, mother. Cla—she didn't ask to come. I wired her to come.

MADAME IVAN. You needn't keep from mentioning her name on my account. Clara or no Clara, it's all the same to me. It isn't her name I hate. If I have my way I'll never set eyes on her again this side of the grave. Just keep her out of my sight, that's all I ask.

IVAN. After all, she is Launzi's mother.

MADAME IVAN. Yes, a fine mother she's been, these last four months!

IVAN. That's not her fault, either. How was she to know? Nobody wrote her about it. And she was in America.

MADAME IVAN. Pity she didn't stay there.

IVAN. But when she got back to Paris, it seemed only right that she should be told about Launzi. And I wired her that Launzi was ill, and if she wanted to come, she might.

MADAME IVAN. And even then, she didn't dare come straight here.

First had to find out whether I'd let her in the door, before she dared come.

IVAN. You are harsh, mother. I beg of you, just for this evening—

MADAME IVAN. That's all right, that's all right, you needn't be afraid. I sent word to her that I hoped she would come at once. Because the sooner she got here, the sooner she'd be gone.

IVAN. Where was she when she sent her message? Where is she stopping?

MADAME IVAN. Stopping! Where did she ever stop? Out of one hotel and into another. Stopping! She's keeping house in a big heated limousine with her fancy-man.

IVAN. Her husband, mother. He has married her. They were married in Paris.

MADAME IVAN. I don't care if they were married in every devastated cathedral in France. I don't care if they were married by the Pope himself. To me he'll never be anything but her fancy-man. [REDEMPTA enters on the left, bringing a large glass of milk on a tray.] Poor Sister—trotting around all day with that glass of milk.

REDEMPTA. She will not touch it. She will not drink and she will not eat. [Puts glass of milk on table.] Mr. Ivan, Launzi's mother is here.

IVAN [becoming very agitated]. Her mother? Where is she?

REDEMPTA [pointing to the door]. In there.

IVAN [moving in that direction]. Why didn't you show her in?

REDEMPTA. She asked me to announce her first. She is very agitated, poor lady.

MADAME IVAN. Humph!

IVAN. Does she know—that—that the child—?

REDEMPTA. I tried to prepare her—for what she will find.

MADAME IVAN. Prepare her! She's had four months to get prepared in! Now let her have the truth!

IVAN. How much have you told her, Sister?

MADAME IVAN. Why are you so anxious to save her feelings?

REDEMPTA. She knows that the soul of her child is very sick. That she thinks herself dead, and is living in heaven.

IVAN [*embarrassed*]. Yes, yes. [*After a moment's hesitation.*] Well, then—mother, if you'll permit me—

MADAME IVAN [*gruffly*]. Don't ask my permission.

IVAN. It is your home.

MADAME IVAN [*gruffly, but with emotion and tenderness*]. And yours, too, my son.

[*The door on right opens noiselessly. Enter LAUNZI. She is wearing a loose, flowing, light white robe that reaches to the floor. The robe has long sleeves. Her hair is down. She is pale. She is wearing the angel's wings of the first and second acts. She walks on tiptoe, almost flits as she walks. Silence. MADAME IVAN rises, so that now they are all standing.*]

LAUNZI. Where are they, the Bethlehem-Children? I heard the gate open. I thought I heard them coming up the stairs.

REDEMPTA. They will soon be here, heavenly angel.

LAUNZI. I must not keep them waiting even for a moment. It would be very impolite of me in my

position. [*To the others.*] Be seated, if you please. It is kind of you, but I do not wish you always to rise when I enter.

IVAN. That is only as it should be, heavenly angel.

LAUNZI. Sister Redempta, you will inform me at once when the Bethlehem-Children are here.

REDEMPTA. I will inform you at once, heavenly angel.

LAUNZI. Thanks. I expect it of you.

[*Starts off in direction of the door on left.*]

IVAN [*alarmed*]. Not that way, my child!

[*LAUNZI stops.*]

IVAN. Not that way. This way.

[*Points to right.*]

LAUNZI. Why? What is there?

MADAME IVAN. Now you just come along with me, heavenly angel. [*Leads her toward right.*] We'll go downstairs and tell Julia to be on the lookout for the Bethlehem-Children.

[*Exeunt LAUNZI and MADAME IVAN on the right.*]

REDEMPTA. Mr. Ivan—forgive my saying this—but you must try to be calmer.

IVAN. Oh, Sister! How can you ask me to be calm? After all, she is Launzi's mother! And after all, she is my—faithless wife!

REDEMPTA [*goes calmly to door on left and opens it*]. This way, madam.

[*CLAIRE enters hurriedly. REDEMPTA closes the door after her.*]

CLAIRE [*in great agitation*]. Where is my child? Where is my child? How is it that I was not informed? Why was this kept from me?

REDEMPTA [*firmly*]. I must ask you, madam, in the child's interest, to restrain your agitation.

CLAIRE. So suddenly—out of a clear sky—such a terrible blow!

REDEMPTA [*firmly*]. The child must not see even anxiety in your face.

CLAIRE. What? What's that?—Oh, yes, yes, all right. Oh, but—all of a sudden—a telegram like that—and then—oh, how can you expect me—?

REDEMPTA [*firmly*]. I know that what I am going to say is very hard, madam, but unless you promise me that you will speak calmly with the patient, I cannot, as her nurse, permit you to see her.

CLAIRE. Not permit me to see her? No, no. I'll be quiet. I'll be very, very quiet. I promise. Forgive me.

REDEMPTA. It is I who have to ask your forgiveness.

CLAIRE. Yes? Why?

REDEMPTA. For having spoken in a louder voice than I should have used.

IVAN. Sit down—Claire.

CLAIRE [*sits*]. Heavens! This is awful. I don't know what I'm saying—I feel so—faint—

[*Is about to take up glass of milk.*]

REDEMPTA. Excuse me. That is for my patient.

IVAN. Drink this water.

[*Pouring her a glass of water from the table.*]

CLAIRE [*taking a sip*]. It's awfully hot here. What in the world's the matter with this chair? [*Her eyes fall on another chair. She stares at it, then around the room.*] For heaven's sake! Am I crazy?

REDEMPTA. Oh, madam—hush!

IVAN. We had the backs cut off—to keep her wings from breaking—when she sits down.

[*He bows his head in his hands. Pause.*]

CLAIRE [*looking at one of the chairs*]. Oh—my child—

[*Suddenly she takes out her handkerchief, and presses it against her mouth.*]

IVAN [*looking up*]. We have an angel living in the house—an angel sitting at the dinner table—an angel singing alone at the piano—an angel walking about the rooms.

CLAIRE. Awful—awful—I can't take it in. [*With terror.*] Is she—calm?

IVAN. More than calm—happy. Sometimes it seems to me that she isn't mad at all. That she has merely fled from the world into this state, merely shut her mind against the facts of the world. How many people there are who have a longing for just such an illness!

CLAIRE. I remember the wings . . .

IVAN. She never takes them off. We tried to take them off, just at first—you've no idea how difficult it is to dress her, with them on—but she was so fierce, we had to let them stay. We pretend now that they are part of her. She sleeps with them on. I don't know how she does it, but she does—all huddled up somehow on one side in the bed, like a wounded bird.

REDEMPTA. She ought to be fed, and we simply cannot force her to eat. I brought this milk here, thinking that perhaps her mother could make her drink it. Possibly the unaccustomed meeting—

CLAIRE. Oh, yes—I'll do my best. Has she any idea that I am coming?

REDEMPTA. Her grandmother is just telling her that you are here. I told her yesterday that she might see you some time this week. She listened quite calmly.

CLAIRE. What did she say?

REDEMPTA. She said, "I worship my mother."

[Pause.]

IVAN. Well, don't let's put it off any longer. I'll go and send her in here. You must be very strong, Claire.

REDEMPTA. You must not excite her. You must consider it perfectly natural that she is dead and has become an angel. She will tell you that you are dreaming, and that you are seeing her in your dream. She believes that is the only way in which she can appear to people. You must consider it perfectly natural. You must talk gayly to her.

CLAIRE. Gayly—yes—

REDEMPTA. I ought also perhaps to tell you that the village children are coming here this evening to sing their carols. It is a custom of the country-side. But perhaps you know.

CLAIRE. I know. From house to house—every Christmas—when I was a child.

REDEMPTA. It is, I fear, an imprudent thing to do. So far she has conversed with no one save members of this household. With strangers, one cannot say how it will be. But she insists upon it and when we tried to dissuade her she became quite ill. In this, as with us in all things, you must take care not to question her. You must talk gayly, and you must make her drink the milk.

CLAIRE. Will she recognize me?

REDEMPTA. Yes.

CLAIRE. Oh, how shall I be able to bear it—my own child!

IVAN [*gently*]. Just as I have borne it, Claire. [*Slight pause.*] She is my child, too. [*Moves off toward right.*] Sister, you're coming with me, aren't you? We'd better leave them alone.

REDEMPTA. No, I'm not coming, Mr. Ivan. I shall stay here.

CLAIRE. Oh, yes—stay—stay—I beg you.

REDEMPTA. I have no intention of going, madam.

[IVAN goes out right, leaving the door open. Short pause.]

REDEMPTA. The main thing is that she should drink the milk. If possible, the whole of it.

[Short pause. REDEMPTA stands on extreme left. CLAIRE stands on the left side of the room and awaits the coming of LAUNZI with her eyes fixed on the opposite door.]

LAUNZI [*comes in on right, gently closing the door behind her. Calmly, in a pleasant conversational tone, unaffectedly, though apparently as if she were giving an audience in her character as superior being. There is a certain courteous condescension in her voice.*] I am glad to see you, mother. What a long time it is since last we met! [*Holds out her hand. CLAIRE embraces and kisses her passionately without speaking.*] Sit down, mother. Sister Redempta, please give my mother a chair. [REDEMPTA does so. To REDEMPTA.] You may sit down, too. [REDEMPTA takes seat on extreme left.] You know my mother, don't you? [To CLAIRE.] Have you met Sister Redempta?

[CLAIRE gazes speechlessly at LAUNZI.]

REDEMPTA [smiling]. Answer, please.

CLAIRE [forcing herself to adopt a gayer tone and to smile]. We met downstairs in the hall. Do you love the nice Sister?

LAUNZI. What a strange question, isn't it, Sister? As a matter of fact, we are very fond of one another. But that is not the important matter now. The important matter now is that you are dreaming of me, and that we see one another. Have you traveled far?

CLAIRE. Oh, yes, my child. I have been very far. In America.

LAUNZI. That must have been pleasant. An unfamiliar world. Interesting impressions. When I was alive, I used often to think that I might one day get as far as that. I should have liked to go to Japan, too. But—gracious!—life was so short! Did you come by motor, mother?

CLAIRE. Yes, darling.

LAUNZI. But the car is not yours, is it?

[CLAIRE looks at REDEMPTA, puzzled. REDEMPTA motions with her head to say "no."]

CLAIRE. No, my dear. It is not mine.

LAUNZI. I never cared much for motor-cars. Did I, Sister?

REDEMPTA. No, heavenly angel.

LAUNZI. Well—how shall I begin, mother? So many things have happened since you went away. My death—I suppose you were distressed to hear that I was dead.

CLAIRE. I was—very distressed.

LAUNZI. I don't know whether you—why, perhaps they didn't tell you!

It was for a boy's sake that I died. Did you hear about that? *Such* a nice boy! Why, I believe you know him! Didn't you know a boy once by the name of—no, wait a second. No. Perhaps you don't know him, after all.

CLAIRE. Oh, yes, I know him.

LAUNZI. You do? [Muses.] Why, naturally! Of course you do! Why, it was you who—How silly of me! Really—[She laughs.] I must be getting absent-minded! [Short pause.] Would you like some tea, mother?

CLAIRE. Thanks, dear. I've had my tea.

LAUNZI. What a pity you were so far away at the time! I died last fall. I had a lovely coffin. Such a pity you didn't see it! It would have been a great comfort to you. There's no use in denying it—these externals exercise a profound influence on one. Try to picture it! The whole room done in blue—sky blue. I am speaking of the evening sky. How curious it is that when one says "sky-blue," one thinks always of the sky by day. One forgets there is an evening sky. However, as I was saying, the room was done in dark, dark blue, and the coffin was on a pedestal—very high—can you picture it?—and there were quantities of candles—numberless candles. Oh, it was most affecting—really, most affecting. And terribly expensive. My father spent all his savings on it. Wasn't it kind of him? There's no end to the kindness of my father. And he has the real artistic sense.

CLAIRE. Your father loves you.

LAUNZI. Oh, goodness, yes! He loved me when I was alive, too. And how strange—I may confess it now—

in life I always loved you better than my father. I loved you extravagantly. [*Stretches out her hand toward CLAIRE. CLAIRE passionately kisses LAUNZI's hand.*] Why do you kiss my hand, mother? Sister Redempta, too, kissed my hand the other day, didn't you?

REDEMPTA. That was because you drank your milk.

CLAIRE. Oh, yes—milk—darling, here's a nice little glass of milk!

LAUNZI [*furiously*]. I told you once that that is *not* a nice little glass of milk! It is an unpleasant, great, big, *enormous* glass of—no, wait a second—you weren't there then—Why, yes, you were!

CLAIRE. Darling, won't you drink it—for mother?

LAUNZI [*scowling*]. No!

CLAIRE. Oh, but sweetheart—really—

LAUNZI [*shouting*]. No, I say! Put it where I can't see it! Do you think I can't see it there?—that's better. [*Very calmly.*] You will forgive me, mother, but I dislike being contradicted. [*Pause. Musing.*] My mother—my mother—you are asleep in America now, and dreaming. I do hope nobody knocks on your door and wakens you! [*Pause.*] My father dreams of me a great deal. In fact, he is dreaming of me nearly all the time, for we are nearly always together. [*In a whisper.*] I am worried about father.

CLAIRE. Why my child?

LAUNZI. He has something on his mind. And he won't tell me what it is. He doesn't want to excite me! [*She is becoming somewhat excited.*] Have you a cigarette? [*CLAIRE looks inquiringly at REDEMPTA.*] Don't be afraid, mother. Nothing is forbidden

me. [*CLAIRE gives her a cigarette, lighting it.*] Cigarettes—they are the only pleasant memory I have of the time when I was alive. This is a souvenir of your world, mother—that world in which life was so wretched.

[*These latter words are spoken in an agitated manner.*]

REDEMPTA [*firmly*]. We talk calmly, don't we, my dear?

LAUNZI. Yes, calmly—that's it. Calmly. [*Pause.*] Do you know, mother, what happened to that boy for whom I killed myself? He hasn't dreamed of me once. Where is he?

CLAIRE [*looks at REDEMPTA. REDEMPTA motions with her head to say "yes".*]. I believe he is in Zurich, studying.

LAUNZI. Is he engaged?

CLAIRE. Oh—no!

REDEMPTA. Please tell the truth. We know all about it. He is engaged to a Norwegian young lady, a student of chemistry.

LAUNZI. We know. Perhaps you didn't know?

CLAIRE. Oh, yes, I did.

LAUNZI. Then why did you pretend not to? We are delighted to know of his happiness. Oh, you will see, mother, when you, too, die; you will find that memories become much less painful. Indeed, they become almost sweet. It is only during our lives that we are restless and dissatisfied. The dead are not so. Oh, how strange we were—do you remember? Do you remember how we trembled once in the early hours of the morning—you and I—how we wept and sobbed and cried?

CLAIRE. That was long ago.

LAUNZI. It is far away. [*With increasing agitation.*] You were lying on the bed, half-undressed—and he

leapt into the room, in evening-clothes—his eyes blazed—he rushed up to you—wildly—

REDEMPTA [*firmly*]. We talk calmly, don't we, my dear?

LAUNZI. Yes, yes—calmly. [*She takes a deep draught of smoke.*] I am calm. But you are not always calm. You weep often, when you speak with me. How curious that you are not weeping, mother!

CLAIRE [*in a choking voice*]. Yes—that's because—because I—I envy you awfully, my child.

LAUNZI. Well, as I always say, it's the merest chance. The world is a difficult place for the pure in heart. Poor living creatures. I wonder how they bear it. I'm sorry for them. I'm sorriest of all, for girls. Hungarian girls; English, French, American girls; poor little girls in Germany. They are forever clutching and scrambling, like drowning men reaching after straws. By the way, mother, do you know that I died by jumping into the river?

CLAIRE. I know.

LAUNZI. I did not scramble. But they—oh, they fight so! They learn Russian—they learn Japanese. There was one who wanted to be an engine-driver. You knew her, too. Oh, they sing and go to dissecting rooms. They take morphine. They flirt. Listen—they flirt with each other. They dance naked to Beethoven. What a world of suffering! Yet how simple it is, if you only stop and think! All you have to do is to die. The world has no place for a serious and immaculate girl. Can a snowflake put roots into the earth and be an earthly flower? It must surely die. You see how lucky I have been. [*Puffs her cigarette.*] But for me it

was easy to die, for I was terribly in love with some one. [*Puffs her cigarette again.*] Oh, not the person you're thinking of. I believe, mother—I believe you were the person I loved so terribly. [*Deep silence. From the direction of the window may be heard the song of the Bethlehem-Children approaching the house below. Starting up and listening: then in a low voice of rapture.*] Now, mother—sweet, beautiful mother—I must ask to be excused—but, you see, the Bethlehem-Children are here! [*Extinguishes her cigarette in an ash-tray and goes to the window.*] They are coming to me! [*REDEMPTA and CLAIRE rise. Sound of singing continues without a break. Looking out of window.*] There they are! Way down there in the road! How tiny they look from here—like ants—in the snow. [*IVAN enters on right.*] Do you hear, father? The Bethlehem-Children are coming! Do you hear them singing? They are dreaming of me—dreaming of an angel!

IVAN. Yes. I came to tell you.

LAUNZI [*fluttering with happiness and with great glee*]. Mother, you stay here. We're going to bring them here. We'll have everybody come in here. I'll go and get grandmother—and Julia, and the coachman, and everybody! Sister, dear, please go down and receive them in my name, and keep them down there for a moment. Don't let them in until we are all here! [*REDEMPTA goes out on left. LAUNZI, too, moves slowly out through door on right, saying in the meantime, as she sees her grandmother outside.*] Granny! Don't run away from me, granny! Where are you going to in such a hurry? [*Goes out, the door remaining open behind*

her, so that her voice may be heard without.] Granny! Granny!

[IVAN and CLAIRE are left alone in the room. The singing may be heard for a moment, then ceases.]

CLAIRE [*breaking the silence*]. My child, my lovely, perfect child—[*Goes to IVAN and lays her hand on his arm.*] Oh, Estavan!

IVAN. I still—love you.

CLAIRE [*wearily, turning away*]. Everybody loves me. Oh, my poor baby! My pitiful—wasted—child!

LAUNZI [*without*]. This way! All follow me! [*Enter LAUNZI on right, leading her grandmother by the hand. They are followed respectfully by the old servant, JULIA, the coachman, the farm laborer and the young maid.*] Father, we are all here! The children may come in. I bid you tell them, from me, that they are welcome.

IVAN. Very well, heavenly angel. [*Goes out on left, leaving door open. All take seats. LAUNZI sits in the center of the room, in front of the table, CLAIRE being somewhat to her right. MADAME IVAN seats herself right, in front, near the wall. The coachman, farm laborer and young maid in the right corner, at the back; JULIA stands beside MADAME IVAN. Enter IVAN on left, followed by REDEMPTA, the door remaining open.*] Here they are.

[*Goes to piano.*]

LAUNZI. Sister dear, come and sit near me. [*REDEMPTA seats herself between LAUNZI and CLAIRE, though somewhat behind them.*] Now let us all be silent.

[*Silence. Without, the ANGEL rings the bell.*]

LITTLE LOUIS [*without, shouting*].

May we enter this honored house to sing of Bethlehem?

ALL. You may!

[*Without, the ANGEL rings the bell.*]

SECOND ANGEL [*enters on left, bringing an illuminated model of the birthplace at Bethlehem in his hands*]. Praise be to the little child Jesus!

ALL. Forever and ever, Amen!

[*FIRST ANGEL enters on left and rings bell. The ANGELS are dressed in wide-sleeved shirts reaching to the floor, made of some rough but pure-white material. On their heads paper helmets of the shape of sugar-loaves, long, pointed and gilded, richly decorated with colored ribbons, beads and paper flowers. At the top of the helmets, golden crosses. The ANGELS have no wings. When the bell rings, the Bethlehem-Children enter and arrange themselves in a semi-circle behind the table: there are eight or ten of them, all small peasant boys, wearing top-boots and caps and carrying each a shepherd's crook. Silence. The two ANGELS take their stand in front of the table and gaze speechlessly but earnestly at LAUNZI.*]

LAUNZI [*kindly*]. You needn't be afraid of me! Isn't it delicious to see how frightened they are! Come here. Don't be afraid. Come here, and tell me who you are.

FIRST ANGEL. We are the angels.

LAUNZI [*laughing*]. You are the angels? [*Laughs.*] Why, you are nothing but little boy children all dressed up! You are nothing but two tiny little churches, with towers

on the top. But never mind. Now, at least, you can see what an angel looks like. *I am an angel.*

LITTLE LOUIS. A real angel?

LAUNZI. Father—won't you tell him?

IVAN. Yes, children, she is an angel, a real angel.

FIRST ANGEL. Not a really, truly one?

IVAN. Yes, she is.

LITTLE LOUIS. Ah—go on.

FIRST ANGEL. I don't believe it.

REDEMPTA. Don't say that.

FIRST ANGEL. Well, I don't.

LAUNZI [*in pained agitation*]. Father! They don't believe it! They don't believe it!

IVAN [*distressed, shouting to the children in a peremptory tone*]. Why, of course they believe it! If I say so!

[*Silence.*]

REDEMPTA. Now, children. Do your little song.

[FIRST ANGEL *kneels*. SECOND ANGEL *places the model Bethlehem on the table and kneels down beside the other.*]

LAUNZI. Come here, you! [*They come to her; she turns them about to look at their backs.*] There, you see? If you were angels, you would have wings, too!

FIRST ANGEL [*rises*]. We haven't any wings.

LAUNZI [*to SECOND ANGEL*]. You get up, too. What kind of shirts are those you have on?

SECOND ANGEL. They are the "child Jesus" shirts.

LAUNZI. Oh, you are the cunningest little things I ever saw, you little, living, country-apple angels! [FIRST ANGEL *bursts out crying*. LAUNZI *is astonished*.] Well, of all things! Now, he's crying! Why, you little

silly, I was praising you! Isn't it a joke?—he's an angel, and yet he cries. Oh, come now—don't cry—sing! I have been told that you sing very prettily.

LITTLE LOUIS. The teacher's very strict with us about singing.

LAUNZI. That's as it should be. I have heard much good of him. I will keep watch over him. Very well, now begin.

SECOND ANGEL [*advances*]. Can we?

LAUNZI [*smiling*]. You may.

SECOND ANGEL [*declaiming, as if it were a lesson*]. Augustus, Emperor of Rome, gave orders that all his subjects should go to those towns where—where they came from— St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary went to Bethlehem but in Bethlehem they could find no bed in the—in the hotel—because Bethlehem was very full of people so they went to a stable and there in a manger the little Lord Jesus was born. Now we're going to sing.

[IVAN *takes his seat at the piano and accompanies them*. The ANGELS and chorus sing one stanza.]

LAUNZI. How I should love to take my place among them!

[FIRST ANGEL *rings bell*.]

SECOND ANGEL [*shouts through open door*]. Enter, Chief Shepherd!

[CHIEF SHEPHERD *enters, places his crook on the floor and falls prostrate*.]

LAUNZI [*yearningly*]. Oh, how I should love to take my place among them! [ANGELS and chorus sing second stanza. *Entranced*.] Oh, how beautiful! How beautiful, and how sad!

[ANGELS and chorus finish

stanza, not heeding her interruption. FIRST ANGEL rings.]

SECOND ANGEL [*shouts*]. Enter, Aged Shepherd!

[*OLD SHEPHERD enters, places his crook on the floor and falls prostrate beside the other.*]

LAUNZI. Mother, they have come for me—they have come for me! Sister dear, wouldn't it be the proper thing for me to take my place among them? I think it is my duty to. They have no real angel with them!

REDEMPTA. You must be calm, my child.

LAUNZI. But it seems to me I might do it just to be nice!

REDEMPTA. Let us listen to the singing.

[*Motions to the ANGELS to begin. ANGELS and chorus sing third stanza. LAUNZI sobs. CLAIRE kneels beside her and embraces her. The singing continues without a break. When the stanza is finished, LAUNZI covers her face and sobs softly. The FIRST ANGEL holds the bell aloft, but does not dare to ring. Silence.*]

FIRST ANGEL [*going close to LAUNZI, reproachfully, in a soft voice*]. You see, you little real angel. You're crying, too.

[*Silence.*]

LITTLE LOUIS. Even if she is an angel, she's crying all the same.

LAUNZI. But it was a human being made me cry. I was crying for the little Son of God.

REDEMPTA. Calm yourself, my dear.

LAUNZI. I am calm, Sister. [*REDEMPTA raises CLAIRE and takes her back to her place. To FIRST ANGEL.*]

Ring away, you little church-tower. [*FIRST ANGEL rings.*]

SECOND ANGEL. Enter, Youthful Shepherd!

[*YOUNG SHEPHERD enters, places his crook on the floor and falls prostrate beside the others.*]

LAUNZI. So you have to lie down, too?

LITTLE LOUIS. She's always interrupting the play!

REDEMPTA. Be quiet, little boy.

LITTLE LOUIS. But she is!

LAUNZI. Who are you? What's your name?

LITTLE LOUIS. Louis.

LAUNZI. Louis— [*Nervously.*] Louis—I once knew some one by the name of Louis.

LITTLE LOUIS. Sure. Everybody knows somebody by the name of Louis.

LAUNZI. What are you doing here, anyway? What's your part in the play? Who are you?

LITTLE LOUIS. I'm the cashier.

LAUNZI. Oh. That makes all the difference.

LITTLE LOUIS [*in a commanding tone*]. Come on! Let's get going! Angels—!

TWO ANGELS [*singing*]. Shepherds, rise!

[*SHEPHERDS wake and rise.*]

ANGELS *continue singing.*

Singing stops.]

CHIEF SHEPHERD. Aged Shepherd, what did you dream?

OLD SHEPHERD. I dreamt that you took a bag of rusty pennies out of your pocket and hit me on the back with them so hard that three of them got into my pocket. [*LAUNZI laughs outright.*] And you told me to go to Bethlehem and take a lamb to the little Child Jesus.

CHIEF SHEPHERD. And you, Youthful Shepherd. What did you dream?

YOUNG SHEPHERD. Oh, I dreamt that you threw a ham into my wallet and told me to take it to Bethlehem as a present for the little Child Jesus.

FIRST ANGEL. That was no dream, my son, but a Holy Vision. An Angel has revealed it to you. For verily this night the Child Jesus has been born in very truth. Go ye and worship him!

[ANGELS and chorus now sing one song without a break to the end, taking no notice of LAUNZI's interruptions.]

LAUNZI [shouting]. You sweet little angels! You darling little baby things, how I love you! [Singing continues.] You pretty little towers! You lovely little golden church-towers! Oh—I love you so! [Singing continues.] Ring—ring—so—sweetly, sweetly, sweetly! Ring your little sweet bells and sing! [Children continue the song and begin to move toward the door on left, in the following order: in front, the FIRST ANGEL with the bell; then the THREE SHEPHERDS; then the SECOND ANGEL carrying the model of Bethlehem; then the choir; last of all, LITTLE LOUIS. They continue the singing without a break. At the last line LAUNZI shrieks in pain.] Oh, don't go! Don't go! Oh, children! Shepherds! Angels! Take me with you! Children!

[By this time the children are all outside. MADAME IVAN has also gone out, by the door on the right, followed by JULIA, on tiptoe, the COACHMAN, the FARM LABORER, and the young MAID. The singing has

stopped. Both doors close. Deep silence. All are motionless. Pause. Now LAUNZI leans her head on her hands and meditates deeply and gloomily.]

CLAIRE. Launzi—Launzi—what is it?

LAUNZI. I'm thinking.

REDEMPTA [to IVAN]. To-day was the first time she has wept in four months.

CLAIRE [going to LAUNZI and taking LAUNZI's face in her hands]. My baby—my own baby—won't you drink the milk now?

LAUNZI [earnestly]. If you leave me to myself, I will.

[Pause.]

REDEMPTA. You will drink it, if we leave you?

LAUNZI. I will. If you leave me to myself. I should so much like to think—alone.

REDEMPTA. Very well. We will go. But I depend on you to keep your word. I will go and turn down your bed.

[Exeunt REDEMPTA, CLAIRE and IVAN on left. Pause.]

LAUNZI [alone]. It is strange—now my mother has dreamed of me, too—even the Bethlehem-Children dreamed of me. Only you never dream of me. Imre! You dream of another! Of whom do you dream? Imre! [In agony.] Imre! [Through the closed window may be heard again the sound of the children singing "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!" Listens.] They are singing. The shepherds are singing. The little shepherds with their long mustaches—and the little living human angels—they are all singing. [Goes slowly to window, opens it. Now may be

seen brighter than ever the brilliance of the snow-covered December night lit by myriads of stars. The children are singing lustily in the distance, as they trudge on their way. LAUNZI gazes after them.] There they go—up that hill. How the little model Bethlehem shines! Yes!—"Hark, the Herald Angels sing!"—They were afraid to speak. But they called me. I saw that in their eyes. They came for me. But they were afraid to speak. *[Shouts out of window.]* Oh, children! Children! I'm coming! Wait for me! *[Turns suddenly with her hand to her head as if bewildered. Looks hurriedly about the room, then catching sight of the glass of milk, rushes to table, hastily drinks the milk, then runs back to window and steps on window-ledge, raising her two arms.]* Oh, children! Wait for me! I am going with you! I will fly ahead of you! To guard you and keep you! And show you the way!

[Flies out through the window. Dull silence broken only by the sound of singing in the distance, now fainter and getting fainter every second. Snow begins to fall. Pause.]

REDEMPTA *[enters on left, looks around the room, catches sight of the open window, and suddenly suspecting that something terrible has happened, rushes in the direction of the window and looks out, down into the depths. She throws back her head, utters a suppressed shriek, then stumbling in terror, hastens toward the door, saying in a choking voice.]* Mr. Ivan—Mr. Ivan—

[Rushes out through door on right, leaving the door open. In the distance the singing of the children may still be heard, gradually dying away. The room is empty. Snow is falling thickly. Short pause.]

CURTAIN

M I M A

A PLAY IN THREE PARTS AND MANY SCENES

Adapted from "The Red Mill" by

DAVID BELASCO

First produced in America as "Mima" by

David Belasco

December 12, 1928

CHARACTERS

HUMAN BEINGS

JANOS, *a forester*

ILONKA, *his wife*

THE SCHOOLMASTER

ETEL, *his wife*

THE POET

PALMYRA, *his sweetheart*

A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

MANIKINS

MIMA

ALFONS

THE MAID

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS

THE HUSBAND

A CROUPIER

AN OLD GAMBLER

A YOUNG GAMBLER

A COCOTTE

OTHER GAMBLERS AT THE TABLE

A LETTER-CARRIER

AN OLD WOMAN SELLING NEWSPAPERS

A GENDARME

AN OGLING MAN

A FRENCHMAN

A WAITER IN THE CABARET

COCOTTES AND THEIR FRIENDS

PASSERS-BY

} *People seen in
Monte Carlo*

Dancers in the Dance of the Damned

DEVILS

HIS MAJESTY, *the King of Hell*ADJUTANT, *his secretary*MAGISTER, *an inventor*MALACODA, *controlling the orchestra*RUBICANTE, *in charge of the three cylinders*DRAGHIGNAZZO, *chief electrician*ALICHINO, *at the great fly wheel*CALCABRINA, *at the reflectors*CAGNAZZO, *in charge of the boilers*SCARMIGLIONE, *in charge of the dynamo*LIBICOCCO, *controlling the transmissions*FARFARELLO, *in charge of the vocal records*} *Magister's staff
of engineers*

Arch devils of the court, Satan's Prime Minister, Secretary to the Adjutant, standard bearers, guards, imps, devils in charge of the manikins, dancing and flying devilkins and devilets.

PART I. *The Laboratory of Magister, Inventor of The Red Mill.*PART II. SCENE I. *The Laboratory.*

Scenes in the interior of the Mill:

SCENE II. *In Front of the Jeweler's Shop.*SCENE III. *The Gambling Table.*SCENE IV. *Mima's Home.*SCENE V. *Janos' Room.*SCENE VI. *The Home of Mima and Janos.
Outside the Mill.
The Church.*BURLINGAM
PUBLIC
LIB.PART III. SCENE I. *In Front of The Red Mill.*SCENE II. *A Gambling Resort on the Shores of the
Great Sulphur Sea. Modeled after Monte
Carlo.*SCENE III. *In a Cabaret. The Black Room with a Red
Door.
Under the Street Lamp.*SCENE IV. *Mima's Attic Room.
In Front of The Red Mill.*THE LAST SCENE. *The Edge of the Forest.*

PART ONE

[When the audience comes in, the house curtain is not down. A black curtain, shutting off part of the stage (at back) is down, but is lost in the shadows. Behind this curtain, stands The Red Mill in inky blackness.

In the foreground, a blood-red carpet is laid, suggesting the flames of Hell, and continues into the orchestra pit until lost to view.

Up on the proscenium arch at left is an odd-looking electrical bridge, reached by a narrow flight of iron stairs. The bridge extends beyond sight of the audience into the wings at left. DRAGHIGNAZZO, the chief electrician at this switch, is often lost to view when not on duty to guide the manikins before they go into the mill or when they step out of it. In other

words, DRAGHIGNAZZO begins where the mill leaves off.

The orchestra pit is flanked by a set of irregular steps on which one may mount to the stage or remain seated to view the scene. On the right the steps lead to a high chair-like place ready for SATAN who, in the First Part, will sit almost against the proscenium arch. Below him, his court will be seated.

Chairs are placed low down in the orchestra pit. The center chair is higher than the others and will be occupied in the Second Part by SATAN with his court on either side.

There is a door in the pit which opens into the place where the manikins are kept.

Steps lead up from the pit into the auditorium. In fact, the entire pit is arranged to receive SATAN and his archdevils that they may view a demonstration of the invention known as The Red Mill.

Before the play begins, the stage and the pit are in darkness.

When the audience is seated and the performance is about to begin, cymbals are heard in the dome. Then from out the darkness, muted horns are sounded. A brief prelude which depicts the tuning up of the vast machine ends in a crash as a strong ray of light discloses a devil, MALACODA, standing on the stage, a wireless telephone instrument in his hand. He is the assistant to MAGISTER, the devil who has invented The Red Mill. MALACODA is a dark man, wearing a loose-fitting red duster over his devil's costume.]

MALACODA. Hell-o! . . . Yes, this is the bottomless pit . . . Yes, sir, the infernal regions. You have Magister's

laboratory. . . . His assistant, Malacoda, speaking . . . I understand . . . Yes. . . . His Majesty with his court and cabinet has started and will be here in a few moments according to schedule. Thank you, sir.

[MAGISTER enters hurriedly. He is the most worldly devil among the gifted in Hell, but he cannot entirely do away with the traditional satanic mark, for horns show in his forehead and his smooth hair forms three points. He wears a scarlet dress suit of the latest cut, scarlet shoes and socks, white vest, handkerchief and shirt and white bows on his red pumps. His tie is scarlet. He is a super-devil, an engineer and inventor and has just completed a machine which is intended to wipe out all goodness in the heart of every man and woman in the world above. He has invited His SATANIC MAJESTY to witness the final demonstration and will exhibit the infernal qualities of this machine in the manner of a skilled lecturer showing travel pictures. He speaks rapidly, but his brilliant mind often permits him to make a jest and he loves to arouse the laughter and applause of the lesser devils about him. He is, in short, a thorough man of the (under) world.]

MAGISTER. Any answer, Malacoda?

MALACODA. Yes, Magister. They've just telephoned the royal party has started.

MAGISTER. Thank you, Malacoda. Brr! I feel an apprehensive shiver down my spine—even here in Hell.

Malacoda, to-day, for the first time, this great invention on which we have been working for a half million years is ready to demonstrate its deadly work to His Majesty, Satan . . . Just think of it! The supreme effort of my infernal career, The Red Mill, the Psycho-Corruptor Infernalis is finished—the most superb mechanical wonder ever devised by fiendish ingenuity.

MALACODA. It's a triumph of infernal genius, master. You are the Marconi among devils.

MAGISTER [*pompously, strutting a bit*]. Oh, I think I'm more than that.

MALACODA. You're the Edison of Hell.

MAGISTER. Even that's putting it mildly.

MALACODA. You are the Leonardo da Vinci of the lower regions.

MAGISTER. That's more like it! By the way, now that I've discarded my working jumpers, what do you think of the fit of my dress coat?

MALACODA. Faultless.

MAGISTER. As you know, I'm not one of those untidy, impractical, scientific devils. I believe that genius should be becoming inside and out. [*Flicks his handkerchief under MALACODA'S nose.*] How's that for perfume?

MALACODA [*staggering*]. Simply overpowering.

MAGISTER. It's synthetic . . . my own mixture—hydrogen sulphide and ammonia. It's wonderfully stinky. [*Sniffs at his handkerchief with evident pleasure.*] Now let's get to work—the final inspection. [*He claps his hands and calls for his assistants who hasten on.*] Scarmiglione, Alichino, Calcabrina, Cag-

nazzo, Libicocco, Draghignazzo, Farfarello, Rubicante.

RUBICANTE [*entering alone*]. Yes, master.

[*RUBICANTE is the most brutal looking devil, burly, thick-set and fierce. He wears a green leather apron. His knotted arms are bare. He carries a whip which, when he snaps it, makes a sound like the report of a pistol. The devils squat low on their haunches and form a semi-circle at MAGISTER'S feet.*]

MAGISTER [*addressing the squatting devils, issuing his final instructions*]. Gentlemen: His Satanic Majesty is about to honor us with his presence. The great moment has come for our demonstration. You have been my faithful fellow-workers. Now is the time to prove that you are true sons of Hell and worthy of the names the great Dante gave you. Careful—be alert! There must be no mistake in our demonstration to-day.

WORKER DEVILS [*in chorus*]. No, master. No, Magister.

MAGISTER. Everything ready?

WORKERS [*in chorus*]. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. Levers, vents, pistons, oilers, boilers, wires, fires?

WORKERS [*in chorus*]. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. Every smallest part turning, burning, churning, bobbing, throbbing?

WORKERS [*in chorus*]. Turning, burning, churning, bobbing, throbbing.

MAGISTER [*notices something in the distance*]. Draghignazzo, see who is there.

[*He points down the aisle.*]

DRAGHIGNAZZO races over the

steps and across the orchestra pit.]

DRAGHIGNAZZO [*running back*]. It is the Adjutant.

[*The ADJUTANT is seen coming down the aisle—a very smart gentleman, wearing several medals and carrying a gold baton with a red light.*]

ADJUTANT [*calls to DRAGHIGNAZZO*]. Attention there, please. Be on the look out—the devil himself is coming very shortly. [*Then in a formal manner, announcing officially.*] Vexilla prodeunt Regis Inferni!

[*MAGISTER presses his hand to his heart and bows. The worker devils jump to their feet.*]

MAGISTER. Vexilla prodeunt! Quite so, sir. [*Looking into the distance.*] I see His Majesty's banners approaching. [*ADJUTANT turns and disappears up the aisle into the darkness. The worker devils group closely round MAGISTER.*] Careful—take one last look. Cagnazzo, to the reflectors. Malacoda, the orchestra. Scarmiglione, to the dynamo. Alichino, your flywheel. Calcabrina, the boilers. Farfarello, the vocal records. Libicocco, your transmissions. [*These characters dash off. They are supposed to go into the Mill which we do not see until the Second Part.*] Draghignazzo, to your electric bridge. [*DRAGHIGNAZZO goes up to the proscenium bridge.*] Rubicante, the telephone for the present. [*RUBICANTE goes to the telephone at the right. The moment MAGISTER is alone, a red glow gradually comes into the pit, as though rising from the depths below from some mysterious source. A faint blare of trumpets is heard in the distance.*] Warn the

trumpeters along the way. Ready with the orchestral records.

RUBICANTE [*at the telephone at the side.*] Malacoda, warn the trumpeters. Ready with His Majesty's march.

[*The trumpets sound nearer. SATAN's March is heard from the machine. MAGISTER advances and looking out over the audience, bows low. The house is in semi-darkness and a reddish glow illumines the center aisle down which comes SATAN followed by his retinue. Leading the procession are two standard bearers carrying black and red banners. They march to the pit, mount the steps and reach the stage where they separate and stand at right and left. After the standard bearers, comes the ADJUTANT and beside him, his secretary (a small, thin devil carrying a big book and pen). Back of him, comes SATAN's guard of four soldiers, then SATAN. Two imps hold up SATAN's royal cloak. He is followed by his prime minister and the rest of the devils of his court. All save SATAN and the imps wear correct evening dress, but the colors are unusual (red and black). The procession advances slowly. MAGISTER stands with bowed head. When the court reaches the pit, Hell's national anthem is sung in Latin in the machine. SATAN and all stand in solemn silence until the hymn ends.*]

SATAN is seen to be a very tall, livid man with the saddest face in the world, dead dark eyes

with circles under them, and a black beard. There is a dis-solute and indescribable something about him which tells that he has left no single sin undone. He never speaks. His deeds and thoughts are so evil that he is a man of action, not of words. The ADJUTANT (through long association) knows what SATAN is thinking and can interpret his slightest glance. At the close of the anthem, the court moves into the pit, SATAN leading the way, the two little imps following. There is a slight pause.]

MAGISTER. With respectful homage, I greet His Satanic Majesty, King of Hell, my Almighty Master, who deigns to honor my humble workshop with his presence.

[SATAN bows, scarcely moving his head.]

ADJUTANT. His Majesty has been graciously pleased to come for an inspection of your interesting device. His Majesty hopes that this devilish invention of a master mind will be a credit to the whole infernal race. *[Glancing at SATAN's face and reading his wish.]* It is his wish that the demonstration be conducted at once without further ceremony.

MAGISTER. His Majesty's wish is my command. Pray be seated.

ADJUTANT *[to SATAN]*. Permit me to lead the way, sir. *[Calling to the imps.]* Mind His Majesty's cloak over the rough spots. There, sir. *[Indicating the seat against the proscenium arch. With great ceremony, all stand until SATAN is seated. To the members of the court.]* You'll find places just below. *[To SATAN.]* Quite comfortable, sir?

[SATAN looks "yes" with his eyes.]

ADJUTANT sits. The two standard bearers and the guard have passed off at a gesture from the ADJUTANT. As soon as SATAN is seated, half-naked devils appear from the wings. Their eyes turn a vivid, winking green as they feast their glances upon him. RUBICANTE snaps his whip at them—they vanish.]

MAGISTER. Are we ready?

ADJUTANT. Quite.

MAGISTER. Thank you, sir. *[He begins by addressing SATAN, but presently talks directly to the audience, as though it formed a part of SATAN's retinue.]* My Sovereign Ruler and most exalted Government Officials: with your permission, I shall briefly explain the character of my invention before giving a demonstration. I have made a man-corrupting machine. Its technical name is psycho-corruptor: psycho—the soul; corrupere—to corrupt. Hence psycho-corruptor stands for soul-corruptor. My machine is a real out-and-out devilish conception. If we put into this mill a pure, good, honest man, within one hour—one hour—he will come forth a finished blackguard. That is the whole idea.

[The court is amazed, incredulous.]

ADJUTANT. Extraordinary!

MAGISTER *[in the manner of a lecturer]*. Now . . . this colossal mill makes bad men out of good almost instantaneously. For example: you throw your good man into it, he is rushed through its compartments without pause; the mill begins to grind away his illusions, wear away his faith, tear his honesty to tatters, break up his affection, besmirch his

love, blow away his honor—in short, it grinds to dust all that is good and noble in him.

THE COURT [*various voices*].
Bravo!

ADJUTANT. Splendid!

ONE VOICE [*in the audience*].
Hurrah!

[MAGISTER bows to the voice in the audience.]

MAGISTER. It destroys all that is God-like.

[*The devils wince and hiss.*]

ADJUTANT. Oh please, please . . . His Majesty dislikes the word.

MAGISTER [*to SATAN*]. Pray pardon me, Your Majesty. My error. [ADJUTANT bows in assent. Then in colloquial fashion, almost confidentially.] Of course we know that up there on the earth they already have man-corrupting institutions—I refer to the great cities. Take an unspoiled young country lad and send him to—er—let us say—New York . . . and in twenty years New York has got him ready for us. But—it takes twenty years. My machine accomplishes the same results in one hour. Think of the time saving! [*Addressing SATAN.*] Your Majesty: for half a million years—five hundred thousand—I have labored on this engine of destruction. I was often discouraged, but the thought of the fiendish wickedness I was endeavoring to perfect gave me strength to go on. Now, at last, I am ready for the first public test. To make my machine, I have utilized everything that human research has disclosed to the present day. To create is not within our power, Your Majesty, but to turn to evil use, with the brilliancy of genius, the noble work of others . . . [*Modestly—bow-*

ing.] . . . therein lies our claim to glory.

THE COURT. Bravo!

ADJUTANT. A splendid idea.

MAGISTER [*beginning to prepare for the experiment*]. Now—

ADJUTANT. Just a moment, please. His Majesty first wishes to be informed what materials you chose for the construction of your mill?

MAGISTER. Something of everything, Your Majesty; absolutely everything. [*Very quickly, occasionally walking up and down as he speaks but gradually talking faster and faster until the word "man" halts him.*] I've used iron, nickel, sulphuric acid, roses, phonograph disks, curses, silk and tin, cloth, opium, ocean spray, hate and love, mud and bromide, maidenhair fern, clam-shells, thyroid glands, passion, vitriol, poppy-seed, rubber plants, propellers, clouds, gas, sugar, liver-spots, pianos, potash, lemons, lentils, sulphur, salt, cocoanuts, pins and snails, sea-water, turbines, eidelweiss, sweat of workers, laughter, sobs, salt-tears and a thousand things besides, but above all—MAN! MAN is in the mill! [*In the manner of a seer, as though in a trance.*] Souls have come through our gates and I have put them into bodies . . . specially processed human beings—manikins. Your Majesty, I have grafted and injected and hypnotized until they are parts of my machine and yet them seem to live. Rays and currents direct them; phonograph records give them speech; artificial tear-ducts permit them to weep convincingly; tickling rays provoke their mirth. Their love is a glowing trance; their passions burn and scorch their puppet souls.

ADJUTANT. Astonishing!

MAGISTER. I have done astonishing things with these slaves of mine. They are perfected and play their parts superbly. . . . Does Your Majesty wish to see my manikins?

ADJUTANT. His Majesty will view a demonstration with much interest.

MAGISTER. Rubicante, the manikins. Farfarello, bring your vocal records to the bridge.

FARFARELLO [*as he is seen to come down from above to the electric bridge on the proscenium arch*]. Coming, master.

[RUBICANTE *has gone down the steps, opened the trapdoor in the orchestra pit and now calls to the devils below.*]

RUBICANTE. The master wants the puppets. Bring them up.

MAGISTER. We have to keep them on ice, Your Majesty. Their human constitutions cannot stand our climate.

[SCARMIGLIONE, ALICHINO and others reënter and remain at one side quietly and apart. The parade of the manikins begins, RUBICANTE ushering them up from the trap below.]

ADJUTANT. Oh, here they come! [*Presently, as the vampires appear.*] Ah, the ladies!

[*They are led by the manikin ALFONS as they file up through the trapdoor and ascend the steps. MAGISTER stands awaiting them. Devils with pitchforks guide them, surrounding and herding them cautiously. RUBICANTE, who will later operate the cylinders on the bridge of the machine, is the Simon Legree of Hell. He gives the manikins vicious shoves and pricks, and the*

devil herders also when he thinks they are not attending to their duties. These puppets represent every character of the play except one human being and MIMA. They are as follows:

ALFONS, a dandy who lives on women; the HUSBAND, who seems stuffed with machinery in place of dignity; the MAID; HIS SERENE HIGHNESS, very tall and foreign-looking, wearing evening dress and orders; the CROUPIER, a flashy and ordinary man in evening dress; an OLD GAMBLER, tottering and disappointed; a YOUNG GAMBLER, just an ordinary young man gone a little wrong; two WOMEN, who will appear at the gambling tables, beautiful but very dissipated and evil; a WAITER, smooth-faced, typical, a napkin over his arm; a FRENCHMAN; DANCERS who will dance the dance of the damned; a GENDARME with large, suspicious eyes; another GENDARME with a pair of handcuffs in his hands; COCOTTES and several other puppets who will appear in the play. Slowly they move on, a mute procession of hypnotized slaves with closed eyes.]

MAGISTER. My millstones, Your Majesty. As you see them now, they are lifeless, silent, like the dead; but as soon as the energizing ray touches them, they will come to life and enact the characters I have made of them. [*To DRAGHIGNAZZO.*] Switch on the violet ray, Draghignazzo.

[*DRAGHIGNAZZO touches a button here and there and a violet*

light steals over the group. Each manikin slowly comes to life and begins to move. FARFARELLO touches a button for every character's voice. They recite in chorus the rôles or parts of the rôles they are to speak in Part Two. A babel of conversation ensues: weeping, laughter, cries, aimless movements and confusion.]

CROUPIER. Gentlemen: have you placed your bets?

MAGISTER [*explaining*]. The Croupier.

OLD GAMBLER. Yes.

YOUNG GAMBLER. Yes.

MAGISTER. Gamblers.

CROUPIER. Nothing more goes.

OLD GAMBLER. Deal.

OGLING MAN [*ogling a vampire*]. Meet me at my hotel.

MAGISTER. An ogler.

POSTMAN. I have a special delivery letter for Mr.—for Mr.—

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS. What strange power draws me here to-night. . . .

MAGISTER. His Serene Highness.

HUSBAND [*yelling*]. How long must I ring before you let me in?

MAGISTER. The husband.

MAID [*whimpering*]. I can't help it, sir.

MAGISTER. The Maid. [*As the cocotte smirks and waves her handkerchief.*] A cocotte.

OGLING MAN. Meet me at my hotel.

MAGISTER. They are reciting bits of the parts they are to play in the mill.

ALFONS. I came in through the back door.

MAGISTER. That fellow is Alfons, a boudoir pet . . . loves married

women. He's the low end of a triangle.

ALFONS [*to some one who is not present*]. Pst! Hide behind the curtain. It's your husband. . . . Sh! Too late. . . .

OLD GAMBLER. Deal. . . . Deal.

CROUPIER [*calling*]. Are your bets placed, gentlemen? Nothing more goes.

HUSBAND. What's going on behind my back? What's up? A poor man's wife in silk stockings such as a trollop would wear!

ALFONS. Cheer for the people's candidate.

VOICES OF PEASANTS. Hear! Hear! Hurrah!

HUSBAND. Out of my house!

GAMBLER. I win.

OLD GAMBLER [*putting a pistol to his head*]. I lose.

MAID. Excuse me. I couldn't come to the door before.

ALFONS [*to the HUSBAND*]. I happened in, sir, merely to introduce this gentleman: Mr.—er—

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS. What strange power drew me here to-night. . . .

OGLING MAN. Any pretty girl can meet me at my hotel.

GENDARME [*looking about suspiciously*]. Ah! Ah!

WAITER. La Mima dances like a leaf in a flame.

MAGISTER. Cut off the current.

ALFONS [*the last to make a gesture*]. Sh! Sh! . . . Hide behind the curtain.

[FARFARELLO *shuts off the voices.*]

MAGISTER. Take them to the engine room. [*The manikins are taken off.*] Now bring me Mima. [*RUBICANTE dashes down into the pit and disappears.*] Your Majesty, per-

mit me to exhibit my super-manikin, —a woman . . . a destructive woman . . . beauty embodied, sin incarnate. What a woman!

ADJUTANT [*adjusting his monocle*]. Ah? [*Looking over his shoulder at the other devils of the court.*] Now we are going to see something.

[*SATAN sits up straighter, cocking his head—women always interest him—awaiting the coming of MIMA, the super-manikin. Several gnome-imps appear from the darkness and crawl to the edge of the stage, peering down into the orchestra pit.*]

MAGISTER [*at the telephone*]. Malacoda, be ready for Mima. [*Instantly we hear music from the hidden machine. The gnome-imps, crouching on the edge of the stage, retreat and form a group in the shadows, sitting on their haunches. RUBICANTE, ushering MIMA up, is fawning, in marked contrast to his former brutal manner. MIMA is more of an automaton than the others. Her face is very pale. Her eyes are dark and large with dusky shadows under them to make them brilliant. She is dressed in white. Her long hair, hanging down, gives her an angelic appearance. She is the personification of an altar saint. She moves in a lifeless, languid fashion; and were she any place but in the infernal regions, a feeling of sympathy would be aroused by her movements. CALCABRINA and the other inventor devils who have made their last adjustments, have nothing to do on the mill and have reappeared to guard MIMA. When she reaches the top step, she is turned by a touch from RUBICANTE and moves to the center*

of the stage where she stands facing MAGISTER, her master. A funnel light from the orchestra falls on her. MAGISTER puts his hand on MIMA's head and turns her round until she faces SATAN.] Behold, Majesty . . . perfection—my crowning achievement. . . . Flames glow within me as I feast my eyes upon her loveliness. Many centuries had to roll by before she could be evolved. I started with a maid of Babylon who was born, damned and came down to us. She was too blood-thirsty. Then I mated her offspring with one descending from a virgin martyr of Lyons. She was not sufficiently bold and cruel, so I crossed her with one of the Borgia family. She has some Napoleonic blood, too, and a little strain of gentle and poetic. Then I gave her a drop of the blood of great players one of Petrarch's kin to make her from the days of the ancient Greeks down to the present. Beside her own nervous system, I implanted another in her body. Then I added another heart. [*Pointing to MIMA.*] A woman with two hearts—two.

ADJUTANT. And what do you call her?

MAGISTER. I call her Mima . . . Latin for female comedian . . . actress.

ADJUTANT. And what can she do?

MAGISTER. She? She can do anything when I direct her with my rays and currents. She is the very soul of my great Corruptor. Does Your Majesty care to see a demonstration of her accomplishments?

ADJUTANT. His Majesty does.

MAGISTER. Deign to take notice. Draghignazzo, attention: your current at full strength. [*A strong white light is thrown on MIMA.*] She will

awaken. [*A sharp violet ray reaches MIMA's face. She turns her head, opens her eyes, takes a long, deep breath, drawing it in audibly as though the very breath of life were animating her, while her hands creep to her two hearts, one right and one left.*] Now she is a living woman . . . roses on her lips . . . the spell of Egypt in her hair . . . I stole two stars one night and set them in her eyes. Look: her smile . . . [*MIMA gives a sunny smile.*] Her hands—kindly notice her hands. . . . I melted pearls to make those hands . . . two hearts beat under them—one madly loving, one cold and hating. Of course at times—Ahem!—I have trouble with one of those hearts, her loving heart, her good heart.

ADJUTANT [*rising. Surprised.*] Why a good heart? His Majesty won't like that at all.

MAGISTER [*embarrassed*]. I can't quite see how it happened myself . . . but occasionally she *has* a good impulse. However, I manage to check it. [*Reassured, ADJUTANT sits.*] I shall now demonstrate. Will His Majesty please observe how she can love. [*DRAGHIGNAZZO throws a rose ray on MIMA's face.*] Ready, Farfarello, with your vocal records. . . . Begin.

[*FARFARELLO pushes a button.*]

MIMA [*passionately to an unseen young man*]. Where have I met you before? How handsome you are! Come a little nearer . . . nearer. . . . Ha! You have flames in your eyes, haven't you? . . . What soft hair to run my fingers through. . . . [*She ripples her fingers as though through hair.*] I want to play in it . . . I'm mad for you. . . . Oh, there's such a beating here. . . . [*Her hand is over*

her bad heart.] My hands ache to touch you . . . my arms long to hold you. . . . You're twenty, aren't you? Twenty and all passion. Take me. . . . Kiss me. . . . Bruise my mouth with your kisses. . . . Crush me to you. . . . Close. . . . Closer. . . . I'm all yours now. [*As though she were really in a man's arms.*] How strong you are! I love you . . . I love you . . . love you with every throb of my body. I adore you. Kiss me again. Don't be afraid. Kiss me—kiss me, my darling, my darling, my da-a-a-a— [*MAGISTER has made a gesture to turn off the ray and the vocal record. MIMA is a manikin again.*] I respectfully beg attention. She will register hate. [*To DRAGHIGNAZZO.*] Full strength. Farfarello, begin.

[*The ray flickers and bathes MIMA in a green light.*]

MIMA. You dirty dog, how dare you come near me! Don't you touch me. Get away from me—let me alone. Don't come a step nearer. . . . Get away. Get away. I loathe you. I detest you. Ugh! [*As though wiping her mouth.*] Your kisses are disgusting. I never despised any one in my life as I do you. I hate you. If you're wise, you'll keep away from me. I'll kill you—I warn you—I'll kill you. I'll take a knife and I'll—I'll ki—ki . . .

[*The current is shut off.*]

MAGISTER. Merely to show you what she can do—a little stunt. We'll turn on the alternating current. This will be love and hate.

[*A rose light is thrown on MIMA, alternating with a green light. Her mood changes instantly under the influence of each color.*]

MIMA. Kiss me. . . . Don't touch

me. . . Kiss me. . . Don't touch me. . . Ah, kiss me. . . Stop! I hate you—I love you—I hate you—I love you—I hate you—I love you.

MAGISTER [*to* DRAGHIGNAZZO]. Now . . . indifference. [*A yellow light is turned on* MIMA.]

MIMA. As far as I'm concerned, you can go to the devil.

MAGISTER [*to* SATAN]. I beg your pardon.

ADJUTANT [*lightly*]. Oh, coming from a lady . . . His Majesty won't mind, I'm sure.

MIMA. Very well, do anything you like—it's all the same to me. Certainly, by all means shoot yourself; or, if you prefer, tie a rope round your neck and jump out of the window. What do I care?

MAGISTER [*calling*]. Reverse your current. [*To* SATAN.] She's going to lie now.

[*A yellowish-green ray flickers on* MIMA.]

MIMA. I wish I had a baby. I want a baby. I want to be the mother of a wonderful boy. I want him to look just like you. [*With a cry of yearning*]. I want you—you—baby. What? Spoil my figure? Oh, please be the—

MAGISTER. Now we'll reverse that current and get at the truth.

[*The light flickers. The ray changes to another color*].

MIMA. Certainly I won't have a baby. What? Spoil my figure? Oh, no. I don't want to have a baby. Have it yourself. Why we can't make ends meet now and a baby costs a lot of money. And there might be two—three . . . who knows? Do you? And they're always needing something . . . shoes or safety pins. Oh, no, I don't want one.

[*Raising her voice, almost shrieking*.] I won't have one. [*Quieting down*.] The ideal!

MAGISTER. Another example of her delightful femininity.

[*The rose ray is switched on*].

MIMA [*an angelic smile lighting up her countenance*]. No, I don't care for jewelry. Please don't ask me to accept it. I don't want diamonds or pearls. All I want is your love. [MAGISTER *has the lights reversed*]. Darling, won't you please buy me those pearls at Seligman's? I'm mad for them, I can't sleep for thinking of them. I want them round my throat, my pretty throat. Ah, don't be stingy. Give them to me, do! And— [*With meaning*].—you won't be sorry. . . You weren't sorry before, were you? You said that hour was worth dying for, didn't you? And to-night I feel like loving you until— [*She conveys the impression of resisting a man's arms*]. No, dear, give me the pearls first. [*Then very coaxingly—indulging in baby talk*]. Ah, lovey, lovey, lovey—

MAGISTER. A variation.

[*A change is made in the ray*].

MIMA [*savagely*]. I'll get them if I cut your heart out—that's flat.

MAGISTER. The proper married woman.

[*The ray is changed*].

MIMA. How dare you, sir! You did, too. . . I felt you kiss my shoulder when you put on my cloak. Even my own husband hasn't taken such a liberty for two years.

MAGISTER [*to* DRAGHIGNAZZO]. Reverse.

[*The ray changes*].

MIMA. Dearest, last night when my husband was holding me in his arms, all I could think of was *you*.

MAGISTER. On the subject of matrimony.

[DRAGHIGNAZZO *quickly changes the ray.*]

MIMA. I don't ask you to make me your wife. I gave myself to you for love. . . . I'd rather be your sweetheart. . . .

MAGISTER. Reverse the ray.

[DRAGHIGNAZZO *obeys.*]

MIMA. Why, you contemptible cad, you're trying to get out of marrying me. I'll give you a week—then if you don't keep your promise, I'll sue you. . . . I'll disgrace you. I was good enough to live with, wasn't I? But when it comes to marrying me, you backslide. But you'll keep your word—yes, you will—or I'll—

[*She ends abruptly as FARFARRELLO disconnects her voice and the light is turned off.*]

MAGISTER. Now she's going to swear.

MIMA [*as she is bathed in another ray*]. Judge, I swear by my mother's memory, this is white. I swear by my father's life, it's black. I swear by both my dear parents that it's neither black nor white. I swear on the grave of my darling mother [*Her voice breaks.*] that I'm standing on this spot—and I swear on the sacred sod over my dear father [*Her voice breaks again.*] that I am not. May my sister never get better, poor dear, if my gown didn't cost a million dollars; and may I be unhappy for the rest of my life if it cost anything like it. Do you see my stockings? [*She raises her skirt.*] I swear by my hopes of Heaven, they're real silk . . . and I'll take my oath that there's not a thread of silk in them. I swear that to-day is Monday—I can prove it—but I also want

to put myself on record as swearing that it's Tuesday. Believe me, and I know what I'm saying, it's Wednesday—and I swear it's Thursday—

MAGISTER. Or Friday, Saturday, Sunday. Go on, Mima and—

MIMA. And I swear that I have sworn never to swear.

[MAGISTER *gestures to have the ray switched off.*]

MAGISTER. She knows a thousand tricks—but time is short. Let us put her in a difficult situation. We shall see how plausibly she can get herself out of it.

[*A ray is turned on.*]

MIMA. Sh. . . . Sh. . . . Don't answer. . . . Let him knock. [*In a whisper.*] Sh. . . . Keep quiet. . . . Oh, he's breaking the lock. . . . Oh! Aren't you ashamed to batter in a door and make such a fuss over nothing. . . . Well, what if I am here? . . . What? . . . Why shouldn't I be here with Edwin? He's sick. . . . Look at him . . . sick in bed—the poor boy. . . . I was not. It isn't so. I was merely sitting on the *edge* of the bed—that's all—putting ice on his head. . . . Of course my dress is on a chair. Did you think I was going to get ice water all over it? . . . How can I bend over a sick man with a corset on? Oh, why waste my breath on you. You're out of your senses. . . . My shoes are off? Certainly. You don't suppose I was tramping round the room waking him up, do you? . . . My stockings? Heavens above—it's a hot day and I left them at home. . . . What? On the floor? Oh, those—they're not mine. Must be some other woman's. [*Then losing her temper.*] Stop! I won't answer another question. Very well, then, kill me. Wait. . . . Just to prove to

you how much I love you, we'll die together. . . . Where's the revolver? No, you mustn't do the shooting—you're too excited. . . . You'll miss. . . . Let me have it. To give you even greater proof of my love, I'll kill you first and then I'll do away with myself.

[MAGISTER has the ray taken off.

MIMA becomes passive.]

MAGISTER. Now I'll show Your Majesty how bad she can be in any language. You're French, Mima—a street-walker.

[A green light is turned on, FARFARELLO connects her voice and she turns into a low type of French prostitute.]

MIMA [giving a wink to some one who evidently passes her by]. *Ah, tais toi! Fou le camp! Sale animal—pouilleux saligaud!*

MAGISTER. You're a Greek thief, Mima.

MIMA. *Μήν κουννηθῆς! ἄν κουννηθῆς θά σοῦ περάσω τό μαχαῖρι περὰ γιά τέρα—Ποῦ εἶνε τό ρωλόϊ σου; Δός μου τά χρῆματά σου, Τό Θεό σου. . . .*

(Don't move, if you do, I'll pass the knife through you. Where is your watch? Give me your money—your God.)

MAGISTER. You're a Hungarian coffee house trollop, Mima.

MIMA. *Héj te, anyál csak egy fingya kávét, és akkor örökre szeretni foglak. Hozz egy tángyér gulást is. Na gyere már ide—agy egy csokót is nekem.*

(Ah, give me a cup of coffee and I'll love you forever. Stand me a dish of goulash, too. Come on—for a kiss.)

MAGISTER. You're in a German beer saloon, Mima.

MIMA. . . *Na, nu sei man nich knick-erig—un jib mich schon die paar Kroten wat Dich der Kellner uff det Jlass Bier raussegeben hat. Un' wo ich doch zehn Kinderchens hab' un' nich'n eenzjes mit 'nen richt' jen Vater.*

(Ah, go on, give me the change left over from the glass of beer. I've got ten children at home—not one with a father.)

MAGISTER. You're in England, Mima.

MIMA [a cockney street-walker]. Aw blimme, I didn't taikie your watch—'e did it. When I talks to that cove, I keep me 'and on my ostrich feather—'ed steal the 'eart out of a wrinkle, the bloody, blooming, bleedin' bloke! Ow, kiss me foot!

[MAGISTER has the light turned off.]

MAGISTER. Greet a room full of people, Mima, from the highest to the lowest, according to their rank.

MIMA [making three low bows—to imaginary Royalty]. I lay my most devoted homage at your feet, Your Majesty. [Bowing with less deference.] Your humble servant, Your Highness. [Changing again.] I am honored, Your Excellency. [Gayly.] Good evening, Monsieur le Marquis. [Then somewhat condescendingly.] How do you do, sir? [Jovially, as though to a pal.] Hello, Freddie.

MAGISTER. She laughs. . . . She weeps. [The rays are taken off and she assumes the posture she held when she came on, head uplifted, eyes shut, hands by her side.] Voilà!

THE COURT. Bravo! Bravo!

MAGISTER. Take her away till I'm ready. . . . Careful, Rubicante.

RUBICANTE. Yes, master, yes.

MAGISTER [*to his assistants*]. Go. [RUBICANTE *touches* MIMA *gently*. *She goes mechanically on her way and disappears followed and guarded by* MAGISTER's assistants.] My manikins are assembled, Majesty—the machine is ready to start. [*Impressively*.] What we need now is a human being, a man of irreproachable character from the world above, to demonstrate.

ADJUTANT. His Majesty wishes to know how this can be done?

MAGISTER. It is very simple. [*To* DRAGHIGNAZZO.] Break through. [*A lever is turned and a rumble is heard off as though a fissure had opened through stone and earth*.] Now give me the sky above the earth. [*Another rumble is heard and a patch of blue sky with stars in it is seen at the right. A gigantic telescope is lowered*.] We have here a telescope to focus upon the earth, that we may look about among the inhabitants, to find a pure, honorable and simple-hearted individual. This person will be brought down and put through the mill. Of course we'll choose a man, for to grind evil into a woman would be like salting the sea, greasing oil, cooling ice, blackening coal or heating Hell.

ADJUTANT. What you say, sir, is so obvious that His Majesty deems further remarks superfluous. In fact His Majesty says to cut out the chatter and get to business.

MAGISTER [*after bowing*]. Quite right. Then let us begin our search, Rubicante. [RUBICANTE *comes forward to focus the telescope upon the earth*.] Let me see . . . the poorer classes first. . . . Some peaceful home, the abode of purity and virtue. [RUBICANTE *steps back from the*

telescope, as MAGISTER *looks through*.] Ah, this looks good . . . a suburb . . . quiet little street, small neat house. . . . [*Explaining to the members of the court*.] A schoolmaster just coming home to his wife and his dinner. May we view a close-up of his home life?

ADJUTANT. His Majesty is averse to education; but he'll take a look.

MAGISTER. Then I shall throw the schoolmaster's home on the screen. Rubicante, connect the wireless that we may hear voices. [*A circle of light is projected on the black curtain at the back and presently we see a room materialize*.] It won't annoy the schoolmaster and his wife. They won't know we're looking at them.

ADJUTANT. That gives me an idea. We could have a lot of sport peeking into homes, ladies' boudoirs and all that sort of thing.

[*The room is small, cheery, very simply furnished. A little table is laid for two. The SCHOOLMASTER has just come home, carrying a small bunch of flowers. He is about thirty-two, a plump little man. He has a bland, indulgent manner until he grows angry, then he is a decidedly nasty person. ETEL, his wife, is a little younger. She cooks, bakes and scrubs from morning until night*.]

SCHOOLMASTER. Is my little wife glad to see me home again?

ETEL. Yes, my dear good husband. [*Noticing the simple garden flowers in his hand*.] Oh, what lovely flowers!

SCHOOLMASTER. Yes . . . from the dear children. . . . [*Handing the flowers to her*.] Here, Etel, my love.

I don't believe there ever was a schoolmaster so adored by his pupils, the dear little souls.

ETEL. You deserve their love, my darling. [*She kisses him.*] Are you tired, dear?

SCHOOLMASTER [*sitting at the table*]. Just hungry, my sweetheart. . . . Where's the soup?

ETEL. Here: all ready. A nice little bowl of hot soupie, for my tired little man.

SCHOOLMASTER [*tucking a napkin under his chin*]. Do you know, my love, my profession is the most wonderful in the world; but of course a man must have genius for it.

ETEL. And you have, dearest. You're perfect. How fortunate I am to be your wife.

SCHOOLMASTER. I can assure you that it's very elevating to feel that one is an upright man. [*He has tasted the soup.*] What kind of soup is this, anyway?

ETEL. Your favorite. Well? . . . Aren't you pleased?

SCHOOLMASTER. I can't make out what it is.

ETEL. Pea-soup for the first time this season.

SCHOOLMASTER. And what have you put in it?

ETEL. Noodles.

SCHOOLMASTER. No, I mean the little bullets.

ETEL. Bullets?

SCHOOLMASTER. Yes.

ETEL. Why, those are the peas.

SCHOOLMASTER. What kind of peas?

ETEL. What kind of peas? *Peas.*

SCHOOLMASTER. Don't argue. There are two kinds of peas—fresh and dried.

ETEL. But darling, can't you see that these are fresh, green peas?

SCHOOLMASTER. I certainly cannot. They're mud color.

ETEL. Oh, dear! I tramped miles just to get you this season's first green peas and—

SCHOOLMASTER. Bah! They're dried.

ETEL. You're horrid! I walked my feet off to get them.

SCHOOLMASTER. I don't care if you did walk your feet off—that wouldn't make these peas fresh. And the soup's cold.

ETEL. No wonder, after you've been fishing in it all this time.

SCHOOLMASTER. This soup was cold before I started to fish.

ETEL. Stop tormenting me. . . . My poor old mother warned me that you'd turn out like this. . . . You were late—that's why the soup's cold.

SCHOOLMASTER. The soup is cold because you're lazy and careless.

ETEL [*beginning to cry*]. I tried so hard to please you!

SCHOOLMASTER. You never mended my suspenders. To-day, just when I was delivering an oration on Napoleon's conquests, my trousers came down, and you can imagine how those nasty youngsters enjoyed themselves.

ETEL [*still crying*]. I had to hurry out to buy the peas.

SCHOOLMASTER. You didn't sew the button on my vest, either. My night shirt is ripped, my tooth-brush is losing its bristles, you didn't sharpen my pencils and my shoe-laces are all knotted.

ETEL [*sobbing*]. I had to rush for the peas.

SCHOOLMASTER [*jumping to his feet—shouting*]. Stop that howling—stop

it I say, or I'll smash everything.

ETEL. I can't help it . . . I'm so utterly mi-miserable!

[*Another burst of tears.*]

SCHOOLMASTER. Stop that howling. [*He throws a spoon at her.*] Damn this whole rotten stinking life of mine—to hell with it all.

[*He smashes everything on the table.*]

ADJUTANT [*rises, beckoning to* MAGISTER]. St! Professor. . .

MAGISTER. At your command.

ADJUTANT. In His Majesty's opinion, we have had enough of this righteous schoolmaster. [*By this time, the SCHOOLMASTER has seized his hat to leave the house and is shouting: "I'll go where I can get a plate of appetiz. . . ." But before he can say "ing," the picture is dissolved.*] Such a scoundrel will eventually get down to us anyway. Your machine is superfluous in his case. He has already damned himself by the sin of wrathfulness.

[*Sits.*]

MAGISTER. I'm sorry. He began so nicely! I really thought when he came home with the posies and that guileless face of his, that we'd found our man. But with His Majesty's permission, we'll continue our search. Let me see. . . . [*He looks through the telescope as RUBICANTE adjusts it and steps aside.*] Here we have another mortal . . . an author, a poet . . . dreamy, soulful. . . .

ADJUTANT. Sounds good.

MAGISTER. Women adore him, I see.

ADJUTANT. All the better.

MAGISTER. What's more—he is in love. Just now, he's on his way to his lady fair. Shall we look in and listen?

ADJUTANT. By all means [*Chuckling unctiously.*] We love the ladies.

MAGISTER. We are about to peek into the fair lady's boudoir.

ADJUTANT. Good!

[*As before, the telescope forms a circle of light at the back and a scene materializes, showing a portion of a luxurious room in which PALMYRA, a beautiful woman, is seen lying on a chaise longue, her arms outstretched.*]

MAGISTER. She is evidently expecting the young man. [*The door-bell is heard to ring.*] Here he comes.

[*The poet enters. He is young and handsome.*]

PALMYRA [*rising*]. At last you have come, you dear, dear, dear—[*He greets her with a long passionate kiss which she would like to evade.*] Oh, how long it seemed. . . .

POET. Am I late, my angel?

PALMYRA. No, no, darling.

POET. See what I have brought you. . . .

[*Offering her a bunch of violets.*]

PALMYRA. Violets? Now? When they are so rare?

POET. There, there, let me kiss that smile.

[*He kisses her passionately.*]

PALMYRA. Don't, Albert, please. Don't eat me up.

POET. I will eat you up . . . every bit of you.

[*Goes on kissing her.*]

PALMYRA. No, no . . . you're smothering me. I'll suffocate. . . .

POET. Now, now, darling, isn't it nice? Confess.

PALMYRA. Yes, but—

POET. But—

PALMYRA. Oh please, let me alone—please. . . . [*Going back to the*

chaise longue, she begins to cry.] Oh, I'm terribly unhappy.

POET [*sitting beside her*]. Why?

PALMYRA. Because when you are with me, you think of nothing but. . . .

POET. What?

PALMYRA. Kissing and hugging and . . . all the rest of it.

POET. But don't I love you?

PALMYRA. In a way. . . . But the moment we're together, you spring at me like a tiger. If you would only tell me of your life, your work, your joys, your sorrows,

POET. My sorrows?— When you sit here and I can see those adorable ankles. . . .

[*He kneels before her and takes her in his arms.*]

PALMYRA. No. . . . No. . . . That's just what I meant. . . . I know that you only love my body.

[*Struggles to free herself; she pushes him away with her foot.*]

POET. Little fury—she is actually kicking me away. Oh, oh, how strong we are.

PALMYRA. No, Albert, don't! Oh, if only once, just once, we could have a peaceful moment together . . . [*Puts her head on his shoulder.*] . . . like this. . . . Now talk to me calmly. I want to learn from you. I want to be a help to you. I want— [*He breathes the perfume of her hair and kisses her wildly.*] No, no, it's the poet who pours out his soul in verses that I love.

POET. Why are your lips so red, so warm, so sweet. . . . [*She rises and crosses the room, but he follows her.*] You living, burning flame. . . . You—

[*He seizes her again.*]

PALMYRA [*screaming*]. That's not what I want! Not what I want. Oh, I wish I were dead!

POET. What is sweeter than this . . . to soothe this little whimpering dear with caresses . . . then to coax her, rouse her, thrill her until at last she wipes away her tears and is ready for more, more, more kisses. Come. . . .

[*He takes her in his arms to the chaise longue.*]

[*The devils of the court rise from their seats and almost climb over the edge of the stage, carried away by the scene.*]

PALMYRA [*in despair*]. I'm going to kill myself . . . I can't live on like this.

[*MAGISTER, disgusted, spreads his coat-tails to hide the scene as RUBICANTE dissolves the view. The devils, greatly disappointed, go back to their seats, making wry faces.*]

ADJUTANT. Professor, His Majesty wishes to make two comments: the first is that you saw fit to blot out the view just when things were beginning to look interesting.

MAGISTER. I admit that, but—

ADJUTANT. The other: that you were justified in doing so because we are sure of that fellow, anyway. He's ours. [*The devils in the orchestra pit gloat and laugh at the prospect of a new poet in Hell.*] In His Majesty's opinion, this fellow is a boudoir hog who is going to boil in his own blood because he defiled love by sensuality. Professor, that was another unfortunate selection.

MAGISTER. We are having hard luck. But it's very difficult to find a really good man. However, we'll

discover one if His Majesty will have patience for another attempt.

ADJUTANT. Keep on until you get your pure, virtuous man—but where you'll find him, I don't know. [*Turns to the devils in the orchestra pit.*] Have you any idea where a pure, good, virtuous man can be found?

[*They are stumped.*]

MAGISTER [*who has gone to the telescope, sees a view to his liking*]. Ha! Here's a very prominent man: moral, serious-minded, the benefactor of his country, the idol of his people.

[*This scene is thrown suddenly into view. We see a platform, draped with bunting, and a MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT making a speech. He is about forty-five, fat, red-nosed, a sort of ward politician—dyled in the wool.*]

M. P. [*as though addressing a vast multitude*]. Fellow Citizens: I, who have devoted the best years of my life to politics and the people—

ADJUTANT [*jumping to his feet, shouting*]. Halt! Cut that out!

[*There is great commotion as the arch devils in the orchestra pit set up a din of protest.*]

DEVILS OF THE COURT. Stop it! Give him the hook! He won't do! Out with him! Booh! Booh! Booh!

MAGISTER [*to RUBICANTE*]. Snap it out. [*RUBICANTE turns the telescope and the scene disappears. The outraged devils of the court whistle, groan, hiss and cat-call. MAGISTER endeavors to apologize, but is howled down.*] Please, gentlemen . . . pray calm yourselves. . . .

ADJUTANT [*as quiet is restored*]. Outrageous!

A VOICE FROM THE PIT. We won't have it!

ADJUTANT. His Majesty objects to another politician down here. They demoralize the place. [*To SATAN, who has been whispering in his ear.*] What, sir? . . . His Majesty says if another politician turns up, he will be tormented, scorched, pitch-forked, roasted, tossed about in blasts of stinky wind and be made to dance on red-hot coals.

MAGISTER. I—one moment, I beg of you. I humbly apologize. . . . My mistake. . . . A thousand pardons. It won't happen again. [*He joins RUBICANTE who has adjusted the telescope.*] Permit me to say I have located a young forester. Shall we try him?

ADJUTANT. Go ahead, but . . .

MAGISTER. An amiable young fellow—lives peacefully in his little cottage in the woods.

ADJUTANT. Is he really a nice sort?

MAGISTER. His wife adores him.

ADJUTANT. Ah! And his wife? Is she pretty?

MAGISTER [*studying her in the telescope*]. Mmm . . . she has a sweet face.

ADJUTANT. We'll look him over, then.

[*Presently we see a spot on the edge of the forest at twilight. JANOS, the forester, and ILONKA, his wife, are sitting on the bench under a tree. The scene is peace itself. JANOS is young, good-looking and very shy. He loves his little fireside and is probably the only man in the world faithful to his marriage vows. He wears a wedding ring.*]

JANOS. There's nothing as beautiful as summer in the woods . . . so peaceful.

ILONKA. My dear Janos, I am always happy with you.

JANOS. Ilonka, my little wife. . . .

ILONKA. Now tell me what you did all day while I was visiting my old father.

JANOS. Well, let me see. . . . I got up in the dark while you were still sleeping and said a prayer. After breakfast, I went to the post office and sent money to my dear old mother.

ILONKA. That's what made me love you at first—your devotion to your mother.

JANOS. May God bless and keep her many years. . . . Then I went to see the sick woodchopper.

ILONKA. You are so kind—so thoughtful.

JANOS. It's simply a question of duty, dear. Then I came home again and fed the dog, the cat, the squirrel and the silkworms.

ILONKA. How they all love you!

JANOS. Then I went into the woods and put back that bird's nest those bad boys took out of the tree yesterday.

ILONKA. God will bless you for doing that, I know. There isn't a day of your life that you don't do some good deed.

JANOS [*modestly*]. Oh. . . .

ADJUTANT [*whispering*]. Pst! Professor. . . . [*As MAGISTER comes forward.*] This looks promising.

MAGISTER. Quite right. But let us keep him under observation a little longer.

ILONKA. And what did you do after that, dear?

JANOS. I read a letter from my dear mother.

[*Taking a letter from his pocket.*]

ILONKA. I'm so sorry we had

words, Janos . . . your mother and I. She wanted me to cook your creamed cabbage *her* way and I wanted to cook it *my* way. She was very angry and I said— Oh, I don't know what I didn't say to her. . . .

[*Sniffs, wiping away a tear.*]

JANOS [*the peacemaker*]. Here, Ilonka, she sent this message to you.

ILONKA [*touched*]. Oh, a violet. [*She takes a pressed violet from the letter. She reads.*] "My dear child, don't cry any more. I love you because my dear boy loves you. No matter what you said or did, I would forgive you. Life is too short not to forgive. His mother." [*She wipes her eyes.*] Isn't she good to forgive me?

JANOS [*patting her hand*]. There, dear. [*She kisses him.*] There's one thing that happened this morning that I didn't tell you.

ILONKA. Yes?

JANOS. As I was strolling through the woods, I heard the clatter of hoofs behind me . . . and I saw the beautiful young countess come cantering along on her black mare.

ADJUTANT. Wh-o-a!

MAGISTER. Yes?

ADJUTANT. I must watch him closely.

ILONKA. You mean Countess Alice?

JANOS. Yes, the titled lady who wrote me that she would gladly leave her husband for my sake.

ILONKA. Disgraceful!

JANOS. God will punish her and all her kind.

ADJUTANT. This is getting better and better.

MAGISTER. But let us look a trifle longer.

JANOS. And what do you think I did when I saw her coming? I

climbed up a big tree like a cat and hid myself in the thick branches. . . . She rode past—looking for me. Then, when she couldn't find me, she galloped back to the castle.

ILONKA. My dear, good, faithful husband!

JANOS. The loveliest countess in the world couldn't make me forget my darling sweet wife. My marriage vows are as sacred to me as to you.

ADJUTANT [*as though he had witnessed a rare spectacle*]. There you are at last! A man who is faithful to his wife . . . probably the only one in the world and we've seen him!

ILONKA. And what did you do next, sweetheart?

JANOS. I stopped at the chapel and prayed that Heaven would bless us with a child. Then I took our little savings to the bank. Dearest, I am hoarding every penny to buy you that ring with the green stone, the little emerald ring you want so much.

ILONKA. Oh, you darling!

JANOS. But don't let it make you vain. As good Christians, we must regard this life as nothing but a vale of tears.

ADJUTANT. Professor, this is simply overwhelming.

MAGISTER. That's what I think. So far—he's great.

ILONKA [*as JANOS lights his pipe*]. You're the best man in the world. And that's why I've cooked you the finest creamed cabbage that ever was made.

JANOS. Creamed cabbage? Oh, you dear little woman!

ILONKA [*rising*]. It'll be ready soon. Can you hear it bubbling? . . . There's a whole quart of cream in it to-day.

JANOS [*smacking his lips*]. Mmm . . . my favorite dish.

ILONKA. I put smoked sausages on top, and under each little sausage I laid a nice, thin, crisp slice of fried bacon.

ADJUTANT. Yum — yum — that sounds good. . . . I always loved creamed cabbage.

ILONKA. I'm letting it simmer and sizzle and bubble till you can taste the smoked sausage and bacon in the cabbage, all nice and juicy. [*Great commotion in the royal party and sounds of munching, chewing, neighing, smacking of lips, swallowing and stamping of feet.*] Here, dear, you keep the letter and violet till the cabbage is done. Then I'll lay it in my prayer-book. [*She slips it into his coat-pocket.*] I'll call you as soon as the cabbage is on the table—all piping hot. It's your own dear mother's recipe.

[*She goes into the kitchen.*]

ADJUTANT. Bravo!

[*The lights are fading. A peaceful day is drawing to a rosy close. Sheep bells sound and the pipe of a passing shepherd is heard.*]

JANOS. This is true happiness . . . a peaceful pipe, a day well spent, a quiet evening, a clear conscience—and creamed cabbage.

[*He smokes serenely.*]

MAGISTER [*to ADJUTANT*]. Please inform His Majesty that I can find no defect in this specimen. I would recommend him for our purposes.

ADJUTANT. His Majesty approves of your selection.

MAGISTER. Then, if you please, I shall have this man caught and brought down here. We'll test the efficiency of the machine on him. We

shall see him damned in one hour. [*Claps his hands.*] Calcabrina? Alichino? [*The two devils leap forward from the shadows.*] Put on your black cloaks. You are going in quest of this fellow. . . . [*Points to JANOS who is serenely smoking.*] Seize him and bring him down. Make haste.

[CALCABRINA and ALICHINO dash away. *We hear the whir and rush of wind as though the two devils sent in search of JANOS were going up, up, up, up.*]

JANOS [*murmuring to himself*]. Was ever man more blessed than I . . . more blessed than I? [*He surveys the tranquil, peaceful scene.*] Happy are those who can find rest and quiet far from the wicked—where no prying eyes can gaze on their peaceful sanctuary. [*Every devil in the orchestra pit is peeping at JANOS, who, sitting in his garden, ignorant of his impending fate, is now singing a simple air:*]

“The sheep are in the fold,
The stars are in the sky,
The moon has turned to gold
The glistening fields of rye.”

[*Blowing a cloud of smoke.*]

“O Lord, protect me as I rove
A shep—”

[*At this moment two hands, one right and one left of him, reach out from behind a tree and cover his lips. JANOS gives a smothered cry.*] What’s this? Let go, you ruffians— [*He begins to struggle and in muffled tones, shouts.*] Help! Robbers! Poachers! Let go! Let—

[*The scene is dissolved. In the darkness, we hear cries of “Help! Help!” growing fainter and fainter—then silence.*]

MAGISTER. We’ve got him. [*He steps forward.*] Your Gracious Majesty, honored gentlemen: as the place where we had the pleasure of seeing this young forester is one billion eight hundred and seventy-four thousand million six hundred and fifty-six thousand kilometers from here, even with devilish assistance and utmost celerity, it will take ten minutes or so for a mere MAN to go to Hell. So—until they arrive—I beg Your Gracious Majesty to permit a brief intermission and perhaps deign to visit the buffet for light refreshments and cooling drinks. [*Seeing the ADJUTANT rise at the words “cooling drinks.”*] The Adjutant is graciously leading the way.

ADJUTANT. Er—I say—have you any creamed cabbage?

MAGISTER [*regretfully*]. Sorry. [*Satan’s March is played again as the procession forms. MAGISTER stands in a deferential attitude. The two standard bearers appear on both sides of the stage, as before. SATAN goes up to the stage, crosses and disappears, followed by the others. RUBICANTE swells with pride.*] Went off very well indeed. [*Then in sudden fear—realizing that the whole test depends upon MIMA.*] Quick—Mima! One last word. [*Calling.*] Draghignazzo? Farfarello? [*RUBICANTE dashes off to get MIMA. DRAGHIGNAZZO and FARFARELLO appear and take their places on the bridge. DRAGHIGNAZZO throws the ray until it lays a path for MIMA to walk on. She appears as a manikin, on the path of light, followed by RUBICANTE. As she nears MAGISTER, the violet ray is thrown on her.*] Mima. . . . [*There is no response.*] Mima, wake up. . . . [*Her eyes open*

under a stronger ray.] Mima: this is the moment that will make me master of the world. With your help, I can destroy everything created by God. [*The devils writhe, they cannot overcome their fear and detestation of this word.*] Do you hear me, Mima?

MIMA [*echoing*]. Yes . . . by God.

MAGISTER. You've got to fight Him, too—God . . . do you understand? You're to fight God and His angels and win. Now—[*As he bends forward gazing into her eyes.*—what are you to do?

MIMA. I'm to win God and His angels.

MAGISTER [*terrified*]. No, no! Fight them and win—[*Almost snarling.*—fight.

MIMA [*savagely*]. I'll fight and I'll win.

[*There is gleeful laughter from every devil and imp in Hell.*]

MAGISTER. That's it! And I'll grant you anything you ask—anything—down here or on earth [*Pointing.*] up there.

MIMA. Up there . . . what's up there?

MAGISTER. A place with streets and people in them. I'll give you the rays for a day and let you go up—your pockets full of money to buy things; things to make you more beautiful; things for which women barter their souls. . . . Yes, and you shall see the big skies and the bright shining moon with a man in it and—

MIMA. I want that man.

MAGISTER [*charmed, throwing up his hands and turning to RUBICANTE*]. She wants the man in the moon. Trust her! Why, I *can't* fail. [*At a gesture from MAGISTER, the lights flicker and MIMA turns into a manikin again.*] Take her to the engine room . . . carefully. [*His eyes ablaze with triumph and adoration.*] You little devilkin!

[RUBICANTE *picks her up.*

MAGISTER *adjusts her doll-like foot which has struck an awkward position in the air, and hastens off to have a last look at his machine.*]

THE END OF PART ONE

PART TWO

BURLINGAME
LIC

[SCENE I: *When the lights go up, we see the same scene. A red curtain is at the back. The stage is empty. There is no one in the orchestra pit.*]

MALACODA [*entering in haste*]. Magister? Where is Magister?

MAGISTER [*suddenly appearing*]. Is the earth man here?

MALACODA. They've just brought him down.

MAGISTER. Where is he?

MALACODA. In the testing room. We're ready.

MAGISTER. Watch for your signals. [*Malacoda rushes off.*] Scarmiglione?

SCARMIGLIONE'S VOICE. Yes, master?

MAGISTER. Tell His Majesty I have the honor to report the arrival of the man selected for our experiment. If His Majesty and the gentlemen-in-waiting will graciously be seated, we can begin.

SCARMIGLIONE'S VOICE. Yes, master.

MAGISTER [*to RUBICANTE who enters*]. Now then, this man . . . allow

for the fact that he is an unknown quantity. We are sure of our manikins in the mill but a little leeway with your lights and levers for this pure guileless forester.

RUBICANTE. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. Before we get through with this fellow, he'll be so low that a hell-rat won't associate with him, the sex-proof nincompoop!

[*As he laughs, he digs RUBICANTE in the ribs. RUBICANTE bursts into laughter and goes off giving his whip a crack. Suddenly, from all directions, mirthless laughter is heard. The music of Satan's March begins. MAGISTER draws himself up with dignity and the laughter ceases at his gesture.*]

ADJUTANT [*strolling on in advance of SATAN, wiping his mouth—he has had a cocktail*]. Professor, don't put on too much dog for His Majesty. He's really very democratic.

MAGISTER. We shall endeavor to be informal without being familiar.

ADJUTANT. That's it. [*As Satan's March continues, the two standard bearers appear and halt right and left. After the royal procession comes on, SATAN's guard disappears. MAGISTER, who has bowed, approaches the orchestra pit as SATAN descends and gestures toward the chairs. SATAN seats himself in the center of the orchestra pit, the PRIME MINISTER at his left, the ADJUTANT at his right. The SECRETARY sits on a stool just behind the ADJUTANT. When all are seated and MAGISTER is about to begin.*] One moment, Magister, one moment. [*His Majesty has turned up his coat collar.*] His Majesty is chilly.

MAGISTER [*whisking a ther-*

mometer out of his pocket.] What? Only one hundred and fifty degrees above zero? [*Calling off.*] More heat.

A VOICE [*speaking down a tube*]. More heat.

ADJUTANT. I ordered not less than six hundred degrees. Do they want His Majesty to catch another cold—and winter coming on? Please rake the fires under us and give us heat in this place. Brr!

[*Resumes his seat.*]

MAGISTER [*bows*]. It is done. [*MAGISTER now claps his hands and the curtain rises, showing the towering machine silhouetted against a flaming red background. It conveys a sinister impression.*]

A clock with a phosphorescent hand is placed conspicuously on the machine. It is only meant to record one hour to mark the passing of time needed to put a man through every sin in the world.

MALACODA is standing on the bridge, in front of the levers, needles, records and disks used by him for mechanical music.

FARFARELLO, in charge of the voice records for the manikins, stands before his instrument.

A platform extends from the bridge of the machine to the electric bridge on the proscenium, so that FARFARELLO can adjust vocal records there and work side by side with DRAGHIGNAZZO when necessary; that is, when the manikins are out of the mill. A number of men are on the mill awaiting the signal to begin.

MAGISTER points proudly to the machine.] Behold The Red Mill, Your Majesty!

ADJUTANT. His Majesty is im-

pressed by the imposing exterior of the machine.

MAGISTER. I thank you, sir. His Majesty will notice the three cylinders [*Pointing to the column-like cylinders on the machine.*] which cover the inner parts of the mill. They will presently be opened and we shall see the great Corruptor at work. [*Calls.*] Rubicante, the manikins.

[RUBICANTE *beckons and the manikins are herded on by the half-naked devils with pitchforks.*]

MAGISTER. Into the mill with them.

RUBICANTE. Forward, send them forward.

[*A cylinder is opened to receive the manikins.*]

MAGISTER. Now our super-manikin will go into the mill. Bring Mima.

ADJUTANT. She is, I take it, the little lady who is going to cause all the trouble?

MAGISTER. Yes, sir. [*As Mima is brought on.*] Rubicante, adjust her in position.

RUBICANTE. Yes, master. Forward. . . .

[*Mima goes up and disappears in the mill. RUBICANTE now takes his place on the bridge.*]

MAGISTER. Attention. . . . Every man at his post?

VOICES OF WORKERS ON THE MACHINE [*In chorus.*] Yes, yes. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. Sire: the mill is ready to—er—grind. The millstones [*Meaning the puppets.*] are in place. . . . Bring on the man.

[CALCABRINA and ALICHINO enter half carrying JANOS, who is frightened. In his struggle to escape, he loses his hat. One

of the imps picks it up and is seen wearing it throughout the play.]

JANOS. O, good God help me! [*The devils in the orchestra pit wince at the name of "God" and hiss.*] What place is this?

RUBICANTE [*harshly*]. Keep quiet. ALICHINO. Sh!

JANOS. O, God! God! God! [*The devils in the orchestra hiss in terror.*] Where have they brought me?

MAGISTER. Although you're asking some one else, I'll answer you. You are in Hell.

JANOS [*kneeling*]. May the Lord have pity!

MAGISTER. Get up—up—up! Stop that praying.

RUBICANTE. Up! Up!

MAGISTER [*as JANOS is lifted to his feet*]. Now don't be afraid. Don't make any fuss and we won't hurt you.

JANOS. But what do you want with me? Why was I brought down here? Am I alive or dead?

MAGISTER. Don't be so inquisitive. If you can't hold your tongue, we'll hold it for you.

RUBICANTE. Sh!

MAGISTER. Have you examined him, Malacoda?

MALACODA [*coming forward*]. Yes, master. Here is the X-ray; here the report on his blood pressure, his temperature, his electronic cardiograms and a few general observations.

[*Imps have gathered to look at a living man. They have never seen one before.*]

RUBICANTE [*flicking at the group with his whip*]. Harrh! You scum! You little furnace rats!

[*Some of the imps escape, dancing away before the whip.*]

Others crawl about frightened. RUBICANTE kicks them, calling: "Be off, you devilets!" and they take to the air with screeches of fear, landing on the face of the mill where they roost like birds on a bough.]

MAGISTER [*who is reading the report*]. The X-ray shows a slight palpitation of the heart. [*Calls to MALACODA who has gone up to the bridge to make adjustments.*] Heart-actuating current from one hundred and fourteen to one hundred and fifteen. . . . Average temperature. . . . Hm . . . evidently a warm-blooded individual. [*Calling.*] Cooling coils at forty-five. Blood pressure. . . . Hm. . . . Small turbine back to two and one-quarter. [*After glancing over the notes.*] The rest—unimportant. Release the man. [*CALCABRINA and ALICHINO release JANOS and take their places on the machine, ALICHINO at the great fly-wheel, CALCABRINA at a lever controlling the plates reflecting the fires below.*] Attention. . . .

WORKERS. Yes, master. Yes, yes.

MAGISTER. Sure, the next thing is to attune the machine to the personality of this young gentleman. I might say, we are now going to take his character measure. [*Calling.*] Ready up there for further adjustments?

WORKERS. Ready.

ADJUTANT. One moment. . . . [*Rising.*] His Majesty begs that you will not let this young man escape out of Hell and give a report on *us*.

MAGISTER. Don't worry, sir. If he were to describe Hell, everybody would say he was—

[*Tapping forehead.*]

ADJUTANT [*laughing*]. Quite right.

MAGISTER. —or dreaming. [*To JANOS.*] Now then, what's your age?

JANOS. Thirty-two.

MAGISTER [*calling*]. Transmission twenty-seven—eighteen. [*To JANOS.*] Were you born in the lowlands or the mountains?

JANOS. In the lowlands.

MAGISTER [*calling*]. Air rarification at two. [*To JANOS.*] Are you religious?

JANOS. Yes.

MAGISTER. Set turbine eight at five, Malacoda. [*To JANOS.*] Do you care for money?

JANOS. Oh, it's convenient to have it, but it's not—

MAGISTER [*calling*]. Switch fourteen. [*To JANOS.*] Parents living?

JANOS. My mother.

MAGISTER. Do you love her?

JANOS. More than any one in the world. Oh, my darling mother, my poor mother! When she hears that I've been taken away. . . . If she could see me—

RUBICANTE. Stop that.

MAGISTER. Increase the main current forty cycles, Malacoda. [*To JANOS.*] Have you ever been in Paris, London or New York?

JANOS. Never.

MAGISTER [*calling*]. Switch number four . . . six thousand amperes. [*To JANOS.*] Have you ever been in love?

JANOS. In love? Well—I . . . I . . .

MAGISTER. Now don't stutter. Were you ever in love? You know what I mean. . . . Tears, kisses, aches, joy, sleepless nights and desires.

JANOS. No, sir, not like that. I have a wife.

MAGISTER. I understand that you climbed a tree to hide from a beautiful countess?

JANOS. Yes, sir.

MAGISTER. What made you do

that? Didn't you trust yourself?

JANOS. Well, it's best to be on the safe side.

MAGISTER. Ah! So you feared your impulses?

JANOS. A man should not struggle with temptation, but flee from it.

MAGISTER [*shouting*]. Turn on the compressors. Sixteen thousand calories under the main boiler. [To JANOS.] You promised your wife a ring with a green stone?

JANOS. Yes.

MAGISTER. Thank you, that will do.

CALCABRINA [*telephoning*]. Sixteen thousand calories under the main boiler.

ADJUTANT. Upon my word, this is going to be a treat . . . seeing that fellow go to— [*About to say "Hell".*] His Majesty.

MAGISTER [*after adjusting a blood-red smock*]. With His Majesty's consent, we can now begin.

ADJUTANT. Please do so.

MAGISTER. Hold your man.

[JANOS *has tried to escape but several devils, reaching out from the shadows, bring him back. He makes another effort, but the imps prevent it by joining hands and surrounding him.*]

JANOS. There's no way out . . . no way . . . no way.

MAGISTER [*now on the bridge of the machine*]. Your Majesty: this machine has a sensitive signaling device—a large bell. Every time the man whom we shall put into the mill commits a wicked deed, this bell will ring automatically. It is the deadly sin signal. I'll demonstrate it in advance. Malacoda?

MALACODA [*who has come down from the mill*]. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. Give me a dastardly thought. I'll connect you with the current. Draghignazzo, I'll transfer my control to you. . . . There. . . .

[DRAGHIGNAZZO, *on the prosecution bridge, makes the connections by throwing a ray on MALACODA. A light appears on MAGISTER's switchboard.*]

MALACODA [*giving speech to his dastardly thought*]. Parents raise their children; but when a child grows up and leaves the parental roof, he should—if his interests demand it—turn against his parents: in fact, no man should honor his father and mother.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds and the big flywheel gives a half turn.*]

MAGISTER. It is functioning faultlessly. Now then: we can begin. Rubicante, hold your man. [RUBICANTE, *who has come down from the machine, seizes JANOS.*] Contacts. [*The workers busy themselves with various parts of the machine.*] Are the fires blue? Calcabrina, see what the reflectors say. Open.

[CALABRINA *pulls a lever and instantly two raised disks (set in front of the metal cylinders right and left) are lifted and the reflection of flames is seen to shoot up.*]

MAGISTER. Not enough. . . . A blue flame.

DEVILS [*below in the boiler room, a sort of rhythmic Hell song is heard. Just as sailors sing at the ropes, so the stokers indulge in chanteys as they heap on coal*].

Feed the fire!

Glow the fire!

Roar the fire!

Hee! Hee!

RUBICANTE [*calling down*]. Hey!
A blue flame.

[*A bluish flame comes up.*]

MAGISTER. I want twenty thousand calories in reserve.

RUBICANTE [*telephoning*]. Twenty thousand calories in reserve.

MAGISTER. Chief stoker: [*A devil springs out of the darkness.*] hold your heat at this point and have your replacements ready.

STOKERS [*below*].

Feed the fire!

Glow the fire!

ADJUTANT. Getting very warm, Majesty.

MAGISTER. Close. [*The floor plates are closed in the midst of the chantey.*] Now then. . . Ready. . . Go.

[*He moves a lever—the machine starts. From now on, the greater part of the action will take place in the machine. A soft purr is heard, the big fly-wheel revolves very slowly, lazily, and presently stops. Vapor comes out of the smoke-stacks. Colored liquids shine from various tubes. The noise gradually subsides and the machine runs smoothly.*]

JANOS. Heaven above have mercy on me! Mercy!

MAGISTER. Seize him. [*To SATAN.*] Once he gets into the machine, he won't realize where he is. He'll play his part, Your Majesty.

[*RUBICANTE seizes the frightened JANOS, pushes him up onto the outside platform of the machine, then runs back to his job. At a signal from MAGISTER, RUBICANTE opens one of the three cylinders below by mov-*

ing a lever on the bridge. This discloses a scene in the mill.]

[*SCENE II: At the right of the machine, where JANOS is standing, we see the show window of a jeweler's shop. JANOS, looking in, is almost blinded by the glitter of diamonds and other precious stones. DRAGHIGNAZZO throws a ray on JANOS, bringing him under the spell of the machine. He is dazzled, puts his hand to his forehead—the desire of possession takes hold of him. The workers above lean over and watch him.*]

JANOS. Well, well, well, what is all this! [*Reads the jeweler's sign.*] "Ariman—Jeweler!" . . . Two hundred thousand pengö* for a necklace. . . A ruby ring for twenty-five thousand. . . A pearl—fifteen thousand pengö. . . Black pearls—two hundred thousand . . . and oh, oh, an emerald ring! Why, a whole row of emerald rings . . . two rows! How they glitter! What beautiful stones! Oh, if my dear Ilonka could only see them! Twenty thousand pengö for this one—just the ring I want for you, my little wife, but if I were to work for a lifetime, could I ever save twenty thousand pengö to buy it? [*As JANOS walks along the machine front, the jeweler's window closes.*] Is it possible to earn so much money?

MAGISTER. Yes, it is possible. [*He turns on the light above the clock to indicate that JANOS is on the road to his downfall and is now in a mood to be tempted. The clock has recorded the passing of two minutes of JANOS' tragic hour.*] Now then, go ahead, Rubicante.

[*RUBICANTE pulls a lever.*]

* (Pronounced pengay). A pengö is worth about eighteen cents in Hungary.

[SCENE III: *The third cylinder of the machine opens, showing a bacarat table. A light above plays directly upon the table, but leaves the faces of the gamblers unseen. Several men and two women are gambling. All are manikins we have seen in the First Part. At first, we see nothing of them but their hands: trembling old hands (in gloves) in which the cards shake; a pair of lean, olive-tinted hands; a very old blue-veined hand; a reddish pudgy hand; a very thin hand; and the hand of a young man. The beautiful slender hand of a woman, wearing several rings, rests on the table, glittering bracelets encircling the wrist. A dimpled jeweled hand indicates that another woman is present. The finger nails of these ladies are brightly polished and very pink. The CROUPIER is at the lower end of the table near JANOS who is still outside. We do not see the CROUPIER when the scene is disclosed.*]

CROUPIER'S VOICE. Gentlemen, have you placed your bets? . . . Nothing more goes.

FIRST PLAYER'S VOICE. Deal. [*A card flies across the board.*] Nine.

CROUPIER'S VOICE [to JANOS]. You win. . . . [*Counting.*] Five, six, seven, one thousand—eight thousand pengö.

[*His hand is seen to press money into JANOS' hand.*]

JANOS. Why, what is all this?

CROUPIER'S VOICE. You won. Don't question it. Gentlemen, place your bets.

JANOS. But why . . . why did you give me this money?

[*He throws the money back on the table.*]

VOICES OF THE OTHER PLAYERS. Sh. . . . Don't interrupt. . . . Quiet.

CROUPIER'S VOICE. Every bet placed? . . . Nothing more goes.

FIRST PLAYER'S VOICE. Nine.

CROUPIER'S VOICE [to JANOS]. You win. You risked the whole eight thousand and you doubled it. [*Counting out the money.*] Two—three and three and eight. There you are—sixteen thousand pengö.

[*His hand is seen to press a larger bundle of bank notes into JANOS' hand.*]

JANOS. Sixteen thousand pengö. . . . But—

CROUPIER'S VOICE. Kindly do not interrupt the game.

JANOS. But I don't play cards. Why do you insist upon giving me this money? Here—take it.

[*He throws the bills on the table.*]

FIRST PLAYER'S VOICE. Nine.

CROUPIER'S VOICE [to JANOS]. You win again.

[*At this moment, MAGISTER presses a button and the light flashes up in the gambling den. We see the various types which the hands have indicated. The two women are dissipated. The old roué has wrinkled bags under his eyes and an evil waxen face. The fat-handed man is bloated and stout. The thin, lean, olive-tinted hand is seen to belong to an evil-looking Spanish person. The very old, blue-veined hand is that of a gentleman with a stern, relentless, cruel face. The reddish, pudgy hand is outstretched by a red-bearded man. The very thin hand belongs to the type of gambler who thinks of nothing but cards. The youthful*

hand now hangs by the side of a hard-faced young man, a looker-on.]

THE FIRST PLAYER [*enviously, as he eyes JANOS*]. He has luck with him, that fellow!

THE SECOND PLAYER. He plays remarkably well.

THE THIN GAMBLER. He is recklessly daring.

CROUPIER [*as he counts out the money and presses it into JANOS' hand he whispers.*] Ring . . . emerald ring . . . twenty thousand pengö. You can buy it . . . Ilonka. . . Gentlemen: place your bets. . . Are all bets entered? [*The scene disappears. The voice of the CROUPIER is still heard.*] All bets placed? . . . Nothing more goes.

[*JANOS is seen outside the mill in the same position.*]

JANOS. Twenty thousand. . . How did it all happen? What's coming over me? My head is hot, my mouth is parched, my hands are shaking. . . And all this money. . . Twenty thousand pengö. . . Why, I'm rich! I'm rich!

MAGISTER [*to RUBICANTE*]. Her room . . . ready. Have the atmosphere warm and scented. Draghignazzo, turn the ray on him in the dark. [*DRAGHIGNAZZO turns a ray on JANOS. We see MAGISTER press a button and the lights go down; but we can still see MAGISTER and the characters silhouetted against the red, sinister background.*] Slow transition to the light ray in Mima's room. Sl—ow! [*To FARFARELLO.*] Careful of the voice records. . . All set?

RUBICANTE. Set.

MAGISTER. Go ahead.

[*DRAGHIGNAZZO crosses the bridge to the mill to take*

charge of the rays. RUBICANTE pulls the lever and the second cylinder opens.]

[*SCENE IV: A portion of a boudoir can be seen, brilliantly lighted. MIMA is seated in a golden armchair. She now wears soft yellow hair and a beautiful gown. Her eyes are fixed on the money in JANOS' hand as he stands awkwardly outside, staring into her room.*]

MIMA [*after a slight pause*]. Well . . . are you a looker-on or a buyer?

JANOS. I don't understand you, Miss.

MIMA. What nice new money you have in your hand! . . . Don't you think it is easier to love a rich man than a poor one? I do.

JANOS [*surprised*]. Why . . . I . . . I think that money defiles love.

MIMA. You are wrong. My dear friend, never in this world shall I or can I disagree with you—no indeed, but when you say that money degrades love, I cannot quite follow you. [*The strap of her gown comes down revealing a beautiful shoulder.*] I wish this strap would stay in place. [*She makes a great show of re-adjusting it in order to engage his attention.*] Of course there was a time when love and money were two different things; but to-day when it takes millions for a woman to remain barely decent—no indeed, money does not degrade love. The times have changed for the better. . . Just because a woman must love some one—must express herself, so to speak, give herself to some adorable man—is that any reason why she should pick one without a penny to his name? And no man with a heart should object to giving a woman handfuls of money.

[*She looks at the bills with large eyes and a manikin stare.*] Emphatically I say no indeed! . . . You don't understand what it is to be a woman—[*As the dress strap slips again.*] I do wish that strap would stay in place—and every year it costs more. Don't tell me you don't know. You're not as innocent as all that, are you? . . . Do you like pretty ankles? Do you?

[*She sticks out her leg—coquetishly raising her dress.*]

JANOS. I didn't notice.

MIMA. You will. . . . [*She throws a flower at JANOS. It falls outside the mill. He ignores it.*] I'm mad about you. . . . I love you because you're so strong and manly. . . . You're the only man I've ever cared for in all my life.

JANOS. But I don't know you.

MIMA [*running along as though uninterrupted—purring*]. And that's why I want all that money . . . to make myself more beautiful for you. My husband never has any money. Oh, did I mention my husband before? I forgot all about him. He's a man who cannot give his wife all the lovely things youth and beauty crave, so of course I detest him. That's quite natural, isn't it? I abominate him . . . and I love you. I love you because you are so pure, so unspoiled and inexperienced. I want to hold an innocent man in my arms. You remind me of a tiger . . . a big wild tiger looking for his first mate . . . in a jungle spring . . . all passion and shivers. . . . Oh, you . . . you . . . you. . . .

[*She seems to have wound herself up until she is thrilled from head to foot. During this, poor JANOS is standing, meekly listening.*]

JANOS. Really you mustn't say these things to me.

MIMA [*blinking at the bank notes*]. What difference does it make if you give me the money? It wouldn't make you respect me any the less, would it? [*Stretching out her arms to JANOS who is still outside.*] Oh, let me put my arms about you, do! Don't be so cold. Let me. . . . Let me. . . . [*Touching him.*] Oh, forget your frozen purity! I can't understand why you want to be so good. Don't be so shy—and above everything else, don't be ashamed to give me the money.

JANOS. I don't want the filthy stuff. After all, it's not mine. And since you seem to be so anxious to have it—take it.

[*He gives her the two rolls of bills.*]

MIMA. Oh, thank you, thank you. [*She hides the money in the bosom of her dress. The shoulder strap comes down again.*] I wish the devil had that dressmaker!

MAGISTER [*bowing abjectly to HIS MAJESTY*]. A thousand apologies.

ADJUTANT. His Majesty accepts your apologies.

MIMA [*touching the money*]. I know you're not giving this to me for love.

JANOS. No, of course not.

MIMA. No, you don't love me—yet; but you will. You'll be mad for me.

JANOS. I love those near to me . . . my own. . . .

MIMA. Now please let me thank you properly.

JANOS. You have thanked me.

MIMA [*attempting to kiss his hand*]. You're so good to me!

JANOS. Don't, please. You mustn't kiss a man's hand.

MIMA. Your forehead then. . . .

JANOS. You owe me no thanks.

MIMA. But really I feel that I must thank you. At least let me give you a little kiss.

JANOS. No, it would be sinful.

MIMA. A kiss of gratitude, sinful? [*She gently kisses his forehead.*] Your eyes . . . [*Kisses his eyes.*] your beautiful eyes. . . .

JANOS. Don't—that's enough.

MIMA. No, not enough . . . not enough for me. . . . I want to kiss your lips.

[*She kisses his lips.*]

JANOS. Heaven help me. . . . What is this?

MIMA. Love. I love you. . . . I'm kissing you. . . . At last I'm kissing you. . . .

JANOS. Your lips are like fire . . . they scorch me.

MIMA. Are my kisses warmer than your wife's?

JANOS [*under her spell*]. Oh. . . . [*With a sudden cry of despair.*] Oh, my wife!

MAGISTER [*with a triumphant grin*]. Now then, climb up a tree—if you can!

MIMA. Don't think of your wife. Put your arms round me . . . hold me.

JANOS. I feel as though flames were scorching me. . . .

MIMA. I see them in your eyes. Kiss me . . . kiss me . . . kiss me. . . . Do you want me?

JANOS [*struggling with himself*]. No.

MIMA. Now, now, don't tell lies. It's a sin to lie. You want me, don't you? [*Purring.*] Want me very much?

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Want me very much?

[*There is a pause. All are watching MIMA.*]

JANOS. What sort of creature are you? You're an animal . . . you're sensual . . . you're—

MIMA [*sleepily*]. Yes, yes, yes, I want you. . . . Come in. [*A rose light floods the room. MALACODA adds soft languorous music to enhance the scene. JANOS' resistance gradually breaks down under the influence of the sleepy-eyed woman and the spell of the machine.*] Come in.

[*JANOS enters MIMA's boudoir and stands face to face with her. At last MAGISTER has him in the mill.*]

JANOS. Who are you?

MIMA [*struck*]. Why I've never thought of that before. . . . I've no idea who I am. [*Thinks.*] Oh, I'm Mima. . . . What does it matter, anyway. I'm love, fire, passion, bliss.

JANOS. In Heaven's name, tell me who you are. . . .

MIMA. I don't know—I don't care; for I can see; I can feel; I can love and I can hate with my two hearts.

[*Her hands on her two hearts.*]

JANOS. Two?

MIMA. This heart [*Her hand is on her bad heart.*] loves you. This heart [*Her other hand is on the good heart.*] does not . . . yet. It holds back. [*With a sudden transition, almost hissing.*] Ah, don't you want me?

JANOS. I want you, yes. The Lord help me, I do want you. I know it's a sin and I'll repent . . . but I must yield to my mad longing for you. [*Making a final effort to resist.*] No, I can't! I promised at the altar to—I must go. . . . I must go.

MIMA. No, you won't go! You want me.

JANOS. No.

MIMA. You do—you do.

JANOS [*escaping from her clutches*]. No, I want Ilonka, my wife. She's an angel.

MIMA. Go on, sing the praises of your Ilonka; but her lips are not as sweet as mine; her body is not as white and slim and you can't kiss her as you can me. And if you have another woman on your mind, what made you bite me just now—here—on the shoulder . . . the mark still shows. . . . [*JANOS gives her a look of denial.*] Well, if you didn't, you want to bite me. Ah, don't be cruel . . . take me in your arms. [*As he weakens, she tries to snuggle against him.*] Ou-u-u. . . . I know where there's a little bird's nest . . . let's crawl into it and stay for two days and two nights. [*In a childish voice.*] Don't you want me? Hm?

JANOS. I — I — Yes.

[*He gives up.*]

MIMA. Am I more beautiful than your wife? Tell me the truth.

JANOS. You are more beautiful.

MIMA. And my kisses are more . . . tempting?

JANOS. Your kisses burn more.

MIMA. You don't want your wife now, do you? Don't lie.

JANOS. I want you, only you.

MIMA. And you'll forget your vows at the altar, won't you? You'll break them?

JANOS. I'll break them. . . . I'll break them.

MIMA. Ah!

[*He seizes her and kisses her wildly. It is a very long, passionate kiss. The deadly sin signal sounds.*]

MAGISTER [*triumphantly*]. The first evil deed.

[*He presses a button and we see that JANOS' downfall is recorded on the clock. Seven minutes of his hour have passed. The imps roosting on top of the machine laugh and shake with merriment. Some flap their arms, as crows flap their wings.*]

IMPS. Hee! Hee! Hee! Hee!

[*From various unseen places, the laughter of other imps and devilkins is heard.*]

MAGISTER. Open. [*The floor plates are lifted. We see the glow of flames.*] Close.

ADJUTANT [*to HIS MAJESTY*]. Very satisfactory, this mill. Great time-saving device.

[*During the above, JANOS is holding MIMA in a silent embrace.*]

MAGISTER. Test your pressure. [*ALICHINO turns a valve and a spray of steam shoots up.*] Go on. . . .

MIMA [*releases herself*]. Now, as an honorable man, you'll have to leave your wife.

JANOS. No, no, not that. . . .

MIMA. Why, don't you know that you can't go on living with a woman when you don't love her? That's immoral.

JANOS. Don't drive me mad! Isn't it enough that I love you—that I am yours?

MIMA. Soul?

JANOS. Yes.

MIMA. Body?

JANOS. Yes, yes.

MIMA. Then how could you be guilty of such deceit as to look your wife in the face again? You'll leave her of course. . . . You will, won't you?

JANOS [*struggling with himself*]. I . . . I will leave her.

MIMA. That's right. You're a good man. [*Throwing her arms about him.*] I love you. . . . Oh, how I love you! Just now when I was kissing you, I went through your pockets and I found this. [*Holds up the letter Ilonka has put in his pocket.*] It's from your mother to your wife with a pressed violet in it. I thought, of course, it was a love letter. [*As he would take the letter.*] No, no, I want it. [*With curiosity.*] Are all men as good as you?

JANOS. I never dreamt that I should hold such a sinfully beautiful creature in my arms.

MIMA. Darling, that's a lot of money you brought in with you—thousands—for a first visit.

JANOS. Did you count it? When?

MIMA. During that long, long kiss— Oh, how sweet it was—while you held me in your arms. But, my sweetheart, it isn't nearly enough. I need more, much more.

JANOS. I'll get more.

MIMA. Where will you get it, dear?

JANOS. Where I got this . . . the card table. I'll go there again. I shall win millions for you.

MIMA [*triumphantly*]. You're going to gamble, aren't you?

JANOS. I'm going to gamble, yes.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds.*]

MAGISTER. Did His Majesty hear that? We've made a gambler of him now.

IMPS. Hee! Hee! Hee!

[*Magister has switched the light on the face of the clock which records ten minutes.*]

MIMA. Now, darling, you really must go: my husband might come in

at any moment. [*ALFONS has sneaked up and is kissing her hand, unseen by JANOS.*] Get out, Alfons. [*He retreats.*] Kiss me good-bye, Janos . . . hold me close once more. . . . I can't bear to let you go.

[*He clasps her in his arms, kissing her passionately. ALFONS suddenly appears again.*]

ALFONS. Bravo! That was a nice, warm, honest-to-goodness kiss.

JANOS. Are you her husband?

MIMA. I should hope not. He's my best friend. My very best friend. [*Introducing him.*] Alfons—Janos. [*JANOS shakes hands with ALFONS.*] You and Alfons must be good friends, too, Janos dear. [*To ALFONS with feigned surprise.*] How did you manage to come in so quietly?

ALFONS. Service stairs. Back door.

MIMA. Janos, you're going to love Alfons.

JANOS. I like everybody.

MIMA. I don't, but I like Alfons. He'll stand by us in all our difficulties. He is evil, clever, sly, cool, unprincipled and good-looking.

ALFONS. I suppose you're this lady's lover, just at present.

JANOS. I won't permit you to say one word that reflects—

ALFONS. Does that mean that you love her?

JANOS. Yes.

MIMA [*drops the roll of money purposely*]. Oh, I dropped my roll.

[*All three bend down to pick it up.*]

ALFONS [*taking up a handful of money, leaving some on the floor*]. Thousands and thousands . . . [*To JANOS.*] Did you give her all this money?

MIMA. No, he didn't. I give you my word. I swear he didn't.

JANOS. Yes, I gave it to her.

MIMA. Janos!

JANOS. I can't lie.

ALFONS. You can't lie?

JANOS. No.

ALFONS. Would you rather admit that you are supporting some other man's wife? Is that chivalrous?

JANOS. My motives were honorable. I asked nothing in return when I gave her the money. I won't tell lies.

MIMA. You'll have to learn to tell lies if you expect to keep on loving me. [*The door-bell rings.*] Sh! [*She repeats the pantomime of the early scene.*] The door. . . . That was the bell. . . . My husband. . . . Quiet. . . . He'll break in the door. He always does. . . . Quick—hide.

JANOS. No.

[*The bell rings again.*]

MIMA. Hide, for pity's sake! Do you want to ruin me? Alfons, help me.

ALFONS [*to JANOS*]. Come here behind this curtain.

MIMA. Sh! [*As ALFONS pulls JANOS away with him to hide behind a portière, MIMA sits down innocently. There is a terrible banging on the door and rattling of the knob. The MAID appears.*] Wait till they're out of sight. [*Pointing to JANOS and ALFONS.*] Now go.

[*The outline of the husband's figure is seen in the glass panel as he beats on the door. The MAID opens the door.*]

HUSBAND [*repeating this phrase, just as he did in the demonstration scene.*] How long must I ring before you let me in?

MAID. I came at once, sir.

HUSBAND. What's going on behind my back? I am not given a key and then I'm kept waiting at the door. Who's here?

MAID. No one, sir.

HUSBAND. What's up?

MAID. Nothing, sir.

[*She disappears in one of the dark recesses of the machine.*]

MIMA. Good evening, dear. Was it you who rang the bell?

HUSBAND. Why wasn't the door opened at once?

MIMA. Now please don't begin again. Really I can't stand this life.

HUSBAND. For weeks something has been wrong in my house.

MIMA. Oh, dear!

HUSBAND. You've changed . . . you're flighty . . . never at home.

MIMA. Oh, isn't that cruel? What's the use of trying to please him. I can't.

HUSBAND. And your clothes! New dresses every day . . . new stockings. A poor man's wife in silk stockings!

MIMA. What do you know about silk stockings? You never bought me any. [*Showing her stockings.*] I swear there isn't a thread of silk in these stockings.

HUSBAND. What? You can't fool me.

MIMA. I swear on the graves of my parents there isn't a thread of silk in these stockings. May my poor dying sister never get better, if—

HUSBAND. Liar! You haven't got a sister.

MIMA. Well, if I had, I would swear just the same that my stockings are only mercerized cotton.

HUSBAND. Ah! You—

MIMA. Oh, why should I put up with this any longer. . . .

HUSBAND. Stop this nonsense.

MIMA. Not another day—

HUSBAND [*bawling out*]. Shut up!

MIMA [*under her breath*]. Brute.
[*Sits meekly.*] Pig.

HUSBAND. Think I can't see the false look in your eyes? Two big evil black stars. [*She stands blinking her eyes to devil him.*] Stop that blinking. [*She now bestows a smirking grimace on him which enrages him more—he shakes his fist at her.*] You were frightened when I came in. . . . Who was here?

MIMA. No one.

HUSBAND. Who *IS* here?

MIMA. There's not a soul here. . . . I swear by all that's sacred, Bela, that no one is here [*As JANOS steps forward.*] except this gentleman [*ALFONS follows JANOS.*] . . . and Alfons, of course. . . . Nobody besides Alfons and this gentleman. I swear there is not another soul here.

HUSBAND. Who are you?

JANOS. My name is Janos Janosi.

HUSBAND. What brought you here?

ALFONS. I brought him. He came with me.

JANOS. I did not.

HUSBAND [*seeing the money lying on the floor*]. What is this? Money? [*To MIMA.*] I'll strangle you!

MIMA. It isn't mine. I never even saw it before.

HUSBAND. Whose is it, then?

MIMA. It belongs to Alfons.

HUSBAND. To Alfons, indeed! Why, nobody would trust him. Where did he get it? [*To ALFONS.*] Did you steal it?

ALFONS. I came by it honestly. Mr. Janos Janosi gave it to me.

HUSBAND [*looking at JANOS*]. Who is this gentleman?

ALFONS. An old schoolmate.

[*Then repeating the lines he used in the manikin parade.*] I merely stepped in to introduce him to you.

HUSBAND [*to JANOS*]. And you trusted him with all that money?

JANOS. No. I gave that money to—

HUSBAND. You gave it—to whom did you give it?

MIMA [*whispers frantically*]. For pity's sake, if you have a heart, save me from death and disgrace. Save me. . . . Save me.

HUSBAND. To whom did you give this money?

JANOS. I gave it to [*Pointing to ALFONS.*] this gentleman.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds.*]

MAGISTER [*triumphantly, as he turns the light on the clock which shows that fifteen minutes of JANOS' hour have elapsed*]. He lied. [*To SATAN.*] Your Majesty, he can lie now.

HUSBAND [*to ALFONS*]. Let's talk plainly, sir. You've been lying and so has the other blackguard. You're trying to shield her, but it's no use. This man is her lover. [*To JANOS.*] Scoundrel, own up: you are my wife's lover, aren't you?

JANOS. I will answer you frankly: I admit that my sinful body desired her. . . . Is that what you mean?

HUSBAND. Yes: that is what I mean.

JANOS. Well then, I am her lover.

HUSBAND. You dog! [*Strikes JANOS with his fist. MIMA shrieks. ALFONS separates the adversaries.*] You'll hear from me to-morrow.

[*He rushes off.*]

ALFONS. Bravo! That was a nice, sincere, honest-to-goodness punch.

MIMA. Oh! He insulted you, my darling Janos.

JANOS. I'll die of shame.

ALFONS [*tersely*]. Or he will.

JANOS. He?

ALFONS. Such is life. Pity brings money; money brings kisses; kisses bring blows; blows bring a duel and a duel brings death. But it will be his death.

JANOS. What? Am I to kill this poor fellow?

ALFONS. Do you mean to say that you feel sorry for him?

JANOS. Very sorry.

MIMA. You mean to say you won't fight him . . . kill him? [*To ALFONS.*] He has ruined my life and now he—

ALFONS. Oh, you can't shirk the responsibility.

JANOS. Then I will not shirk it.

MIMA. You will fight him?

JANOS. Yes, I will fight him.

MIMA. Will you shoot to kill?

JANOS. Yes.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds, as the clock is shown by*
MAGISTER. *Seventeen minutes have passed. MIMA's room is blotted out.*]

MAGISTER [*triumphantly, as he comes down from the machine*]. He is ready to kill now.

IMPS [*in glee*]. Hee! Hee!

MAGISTER [*who picks up the flower MIMA has thrown at JANOS and puts it in his buttonhole*]. I respectfully request silence and attention while the duel takes place. We must be very careful that the bullets take the desired course, otherwise one of us might be hit. Malacoda, what's the tension?

MALACODA. Eight hundred and ten—twenty-two.

MAGISTER. Better give the main coupler one turn forward. Ready.

. . . Careful. [*There is a buzzing, rumbling, hissing; then two pistol shots are heard.*] Well? Find out the result.

MALACODA [*telephoning*]. Hello there? The boss wants to know the outcome of that duel? . . . Yes, I got you. . . All right. Thanks. [*To MAGISTER.*] The man from the earth was very slightly wounded.

MAGISTER [*taking his place on the bridge*]. Then we can proceed at once. Ready there, Rubicante. Go. [*RUBICANTE turns a cylinder.*]

[SCENE V: *A room in which JANOS is discovered seated in a large arm-chair, a black bandage round his head. ALFONS stands behind him.*]

JANOS. Alfons, you stood by me in my darkest hour. You're a good, faithful friend. . . Where is Mima?

ALFONS. I don't know. I saw her just before shots were exchanged, then she disappeared.

JANOS. I must find her. She was frightened. She—

ALFONS. I'll go, Janos. You stay here.

JANOS. I wonder what has happened to her.

ALFONS. Poor Mima! What is to become of her?

JANOS. My darling, my beautiful martyred angel.

ALFONS. She certainly needs some one to protect her. Her husband will drive her to the streets.

JANOS. Oh!

ALFONS. But I've thought of a way in which you can make an enormous fortune and quickly, too. We'll form a corporation.

JANOS [*grasping at the idea*]. Yes, yes.

ALFONS. Millions . . . we'll make millions. . . . Buy up the Kata iron mines.

JANOS. And Mima can have everything her heart desires. I'll make her Queen of the World. I'll— Go, go, Alfons, find her. Perhaps at this very moment she is sobbing her heart out and—

[*The door opens and MIMA appears, her hat on sideways, a splintered parasol in her hand.*]

MIMA. Wh-ew!

JANOS }
ALFONS } [*almost together*].

Mima! Where have you been, Mima?

MIMA. Where have I been? I went back home for my clothes, of course—my clothes and jewelry. . .

Such a row! [*To JANOS.*] How are you, dear? Better? [*Kisses him.*]

My poor boy. . . . [*Thinking of her husband.*] The pig! He wouldn't give me a thing. He threw me out.

[*To JANOS.*] My poor darling. . . . [*Thinking of her husband.*]

Wouldn't let me have a thing—wouldn't even allow me to carry away a shirt. [*To ALFONS.*] What does the doctor say? [*To JANOS.*] Can I help it if I love you better than I do him. [*To ALFONS.*] Can I?

[*To JANOS.*] One good thing, dearest, you shot him in the foot—the two-faced rat! [*Holds up her splintered parasol.*] I tried to get a crack at him, but I couldn't. [*To JANOS,*

in a caressing voice.] I love you. . . . Oh, if you'd only fired a bullet through his heart. . . . Put your arms about me. . . . I love you. . . . He threw all my pretty things out of the window. . . . Cut my chin-chilla coat to ribbons—the whole lawn was rabbity with it. If there's a man I hate— Do you love me?

JANOS. I worship you.

MIMA. I'm completely used up. At first I thought perhaps it was indigestion, but it's just excitement and love.

JANOS. My darling, my—

MIMA. I'm a cast-off wife. I'll start a suit for divorce. [*To ALFONS.*]

Isn't he handsome? [*To JANOS.*] Tell me again, you love me. [*Sniffs*

—thinking of her husband.] He wouldn't even give me my hairpins.

Oh, how I hate that man! [*To JANOS.*] My dear, if anything had happened to you. . . .

JANOS. I would die for you, Mima.

ALFONS. What do you intend to do now, Mima?

MIMA. I'll have to live with mother, I suppose . . . but that's terrible. . . . She will cook onions and stink up the house.

ALFONS. Don't worry, Mima. Janos will help you.

MIMA. Oh, but money isn't everything. I despise it. I've got to think of my honor now . . . my social position, my name . . . the name of Mima.

ALFONS. There's only one course left. As an honorable man, Janos, you must marry Mima as soon as she is free.

JANOS. But I . . . I myself am—

[*He would say "married," but is interrupted.*]

MIMA. Yes, I know, but my brother is a Governor and my uncle's a Cabinet Minister's secretary and I can't stand out on the pavements in a shirt, can I, Alfons? And I must have a name—somebody's name—mine's ruined.

ALFONS [*to JANOS*]. If you would stake me, I—

MIMA. Yes . . . you could give Alfons enough money to put him in

a position to marry me, if you can't. He has loved me for years.

JANOS. What? Give you to Alfons—no!

ALFONS. I love her and I'll marry her if you—

MIMA [*apart to ALFONS*]. Don't complicate things, you idiot.

JANOS. No, no! I should die if he took you from me. Mima, you're mine.

[*A LETTER-CARRIER comes in, advancing one step toward JANOS.*]

LETTER-CARRIER. Registered letter for Mr. Janos Janosi. Sign, please. [*JANOS signs and takes the letter—stares at it—then drops into a chair, overcome.*] Good day.

[*He goes.*]

MIMA. Why are you sitting there like that? Do you know the writing?

JANOS. My wife's. . . .

MIMA. Haven't you forgotten her yet?

JANOS. I can't forget her in a moment. . . . Some little remnants of affection. . . . We loved each other for years. She was good, faithful and . . .

MIMA. He's breaking my heart. He is talking about little remnants of her. [*Clinging to ALFONS.*] I'm jealous . . . I'm mad about him and he—

JANOS. But, dearest—

MIMA [*to ALFONS*]. If he prefers another woman, take me to a dance, a restaurant—any place.

JANOS. Mima. . . .

MIMA. Here I am living like an old maid. I'm young . . . hungry and thirsty for life and its spring-time, and he's mooning over a letter. Alfons, he doesn't want me. Will you

take me out, Alfons? We won't come back until morning.

JANOS. Mima, don't torture me. . . . Oh, how can I conquer this mad desire—this longing for you? [*Finally, in a low voice.*] I will desert my wife.

[*MIMA secretly signals to ALFONS who retires to one side.*]

MIMA. Stand up. [*JANOS rises. She takes his handkerchief from his pocket.*] There, there. . . . Such a big boy and crying. . . . Let me wipe away the tears. . . . Now, then, show me that letter. Open it. . . . What does she say?

JANOS [*reading*]. "Dear Janos: What did I do that displeased you? I'm sorry, and—" She wants me to come back. She'll forgive me.

MIMA. Yes and I'll lose you if you go back to your wife. She's one of those girls with the smell of milk about them . . . sweet and pure.

JANOS. She expects . . . to . . . to become a mother.

MIMA [*putting both hands on her good heart—pained*]. Oh, this is terrible! Oh dear . . . a baby! Oh, the poor woman . . . and Janos is here with me.

JANOS. My poor Ilonka. . . .

MIMA. Janos, you must go home. It's over. Go back to her. Oh, the poor woman. . . . Good-by, Janos.

MAGISTER [*annoyed*]. It's her good heart again.

[*One of the liquid lights has become agitated and has risen in a gauge. As MAGISTER touches a button, it goes down and MIMA's kindly feeling goes with it.*]

MIMA [*to ALFONS*]. Take me away. I'm not going to stand here and listen to this outburst of father-

hood. Let him go home and rock the baby. [To JANOS.] Congratulations! [To ALFONS.] He can always remember this: my death lies at his door. But before I leave the world, I'm going to have one last wild night. I'm going to throw myself into the arms of this good-looking young scoundrel—*l'enfant gaté*. I'm going to let him crush my body and smother me in kisses! . . . So daddy, run along. Go home to the soup pot and weep a shirt-tail full of tears.

JANOS. Mima!

MIMA. Here's my consolation. . . . [Dreamily.] Alfons. . . .

ALFONS. Yes, dear.

MIMA. You need a shave. [Pushing him away.] *C'est dégoûtant*.

ALFONS. Come on. Let's go.

MIMA. One minute. [She powders her nose.] I must make myself lovely [Uses rouge.] for our [Another dab.] hot [Another dab.] damnation.

ALFONS. Yes, dear.

JANOS. Oh!

MIMA. What a wonderful baby we could have had if . . . What a mother I would have made if . . . Never mind—that's past. . . . Let's go.

[She goes to the door with ALFONS.]

JANOS. Mima, why do you torture me? O God! [The devils cringe.] I cry to you, help me! You cannot . . . Mima, stay with me. I—I swear to desert Ilonka and my poor little child . . . for you. I swear—

[As JANOS embraces MIMA, the deadly sin signal sounds and sudden darkness falls. The cylinders close. From out the shadows, a dozen devilkins and devilets wreathed in flames

gleefully execute a few steps and disappear in a mad whirl.]

THE IMPS ON THE MACHINE. Hee! Hee! Hee! Hee!

[From everywhere a faint echo of their laughter is heard. When the lights go up.]

MAGISTER. I beg to call His Majesty's attention to the fact that the millstones have been grinding this man less than twenty minutes [Indicating the clock.] and he has already broken up a home, turned into a liar and gambler, fired at a brother man, deserted his wife and disowned his unborn child.

ADJUTANT. His Majesty is highly gratified.

MAGISTER. And we have barely begun, Your Majesty.

ADJUTANT. But [Rising.] His Majesty wishes to say that it is very easy to desert your wife when her back is turned. Nearly any man is willing to be unfaithful to his wife when she isn't looking. But once let his wife catch him at it and he wouldn't be so cocky.

MAGISTER. I have allowed for that.

ADJUTANT. Then go ahead.

MAGISTER. We'll pass over what would have taken place in—say a couple of months of this man's life, by turning the time wheels ahead. [To ALICHINO.] Switch. Let time fly. [ALICHINO makes an adjustment.] Stoke the fires under the upper boilers. More pressure.

CALCABRINA [telephoning]. More pressure—upper boilers.

MAGISTER. All ready?

RUBICANTE. Ready, sir.

MAGISTER. Start the brilliant career wheels going.

[ALICHINO makes an adjustment.]

MALACODA. What shall we switch in first: politics or high finance?

MAGISTER. Always politics first. Let go on politics.

[*The lights dim on the bridge.*

From the interior of the closed machine come strains of music and cheers.]

ALFONS' VOICE. Fellow citizens—

VOICES OF THE CROWD. Hear! [*A little light over FARFARELLO's board shows him pressing buttons for various voices.*] Hear! Hear!

ALFONS' VOICE. I put before you, for official nomination, the name of Janos Janosi. [*FARFARELLO reaches over to a far-off button and voices in the distance call "Hurrah!"*] Janos Janosi is honor itself. Janos Janosi is the wealthiest man in this community. Janos Janosi has bought the Kata Iron Works. He will see that there are no empty flour bins in our town. [*FARFARELLO reaches over to the far-off button and the distant crowd cheers wildly again.*] I have the honor to announce that we have officially nominated Mr. Janos Janosi. And now, fellow citizens, let us appoint a committee to pay our respects to him.

[*Music and cheers are heard in the belly of the machine*

MAGISTER. Go ahead.

[*RUBICANTE turns his lever.*]

[SCENE VI: *A pleasant room overlooking a garden. JANOS is alone. The band is playing the same tune in the distance. Presently ALFONS is heard under the open window.*]

ALFONS' VOICE. Cheer for the people's candidate. [*Cheers and cries of "Janosil Janos Janosil!"* ALFONS enters somewhat hurriedly,

hat in hand.] Janos, I have a delegation of peasants out here. Your election is certain. Come, say a few words, tell them you're proud to be their representative.

JANOS. No, no, I shan't accept. . . . Vain, empty honors. . . . I'd rather slip away with Mima and forget everything.

ALFONS. You seem to forget that she hasn't been granted her divorce.

JANOS. Only a question of days.

ALFONS. Everybody knows she's your—

JANOS. Alfons!

ALFONS. Be a Member of Parliament when you marry her—that'll whitewash her. It will put the world at your feet. You'll be a king of finance. [*At this moment, the march music takes an ominous minor strain.*] For Kata is noted for its iron mines. We'll flood the streets with your shares—water the stock till it leaks. We'll make widows and orphans give their last penny. You'll rake in a cool fortune.

JANOS. No. I cannot accept.

ALFONS [*calling*]. Mima, come in. [*MIMA sticks her head in between the curtain at a door.*] He refuses to become a Member of Parliament and the king of finance.

MIMA [*coming into the room*]. What? Why, it can't be possible— [*As ALFONS is about to speak.*] Shut up! [*To JANOS.*] Did you refuse, dearest?

JANOS. Yes.

MIMA [*to ALFONS*]. Can you imagine that? He broke up my home; lost me a good, kind husband, a man I adored till he came along; and now he's pushing me into the poorhouse.

BURLINGA

OL I

[*She sits on the arm of a chair and pretends to weep.*]

JANOS. I'll have nothing to do with it.

MIMA. Oh, dear, dear, what's to become of me if he doesn't?

JANOS. Don't ask it, Mima. Don't ask it.

MIMA [*wiping her nose, despairingly*]. Oh dear, to think—

JANOS. Would you have me rob widows and orphans; sell my soul for—

MIMA. Yes. Accept it. You must accept it. I'm a cast-off woman . . . my husband kept my jewelry and I want more. I want a long string of black pearls. No one else has one. . . . Get it.

JANOS [*hesitates*]. No, I—

MIMA. A-h, sweetheart. . . .

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Ah, do be a king of finance.

JANOS. No, I—

MIMA. Ah, I love you. [*Putting an arm round JANOS. Whispering to ALFONS, who has come forward and is kissing her hand.*] Will you get out! Every time you kiss my hand, you bite me. [*She gives ALFONS a backward kick. He hops away, limping.*] Janos, you know how I can love. . . . Don't make me hate you.

JANOS. So I'm to wallow in this dirty mire. . . . Very well, then, I'll accept it; but God [*The devils wince.*] is my witness that I'm doing this for you and you alone.

[*He goes to the window.*]

VOICES FROM BELOW. Hurrah for Janos Janosi!

ALFONS [*addressing JANOS deferentially from the balcony*]. We have come before Your Honor to request

you to graciously accept the nomination for Member of Parliament for the Kata District. The people need your impeccable honesty to protect their interests.

PEASANTS. Hurray for our candidate! Hurray!

MIMA. Mariska—[*The MAID appears from the shadows.*—have every jeweler send up black pearls—a long string of black pearls. . . . Wait! Pearls that men have lost their souls for—I won't have any other.

[*By this time the cheers have ended.*]

JANOS [*on the balcony*]. Fellow Citizens: you have conferred a great honor upon me.

VOICES. Hear! Hear!

JANOS. I take my solemn oath that I accept this sacred responsibility for the people alone and no personal motives can sway me.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds.*

The light on the clock shows that twenty-five minutes have elapsed.]

MAGISTER [*triumphantly*]. Now he has become a hypocrite.

IMPS. Hip! Hip! Hypocrite! Hee! Hee! Hee! Hee!

MIMA [*stepping out of the mill, laughing*]. Ha! Ha! Ha! [*As she gets away from the strong light of the room, a shadow falls on her and her laughter dies out.*] Ha. . . .

[*A change gradually takes place—her hands fall to her sides, she begins to droop.*]

MAGISTER [*giving directions to DRAGHIGNAZZO who has hastened to the bridge on the proscenium arch*]. Draghignazzo, keep your eye on her.

[*JANOS comes from the balcony and steps out of the mill, the door closing behind him. As*

JANOS comes forward, MIMA follows, growing more and more helpless. JANOS (*who has not noticed what is happening to her*) reaches back and takes her hand. This gives her strength enough to come forward, but her feet are leaden—she cannot raise them from the floor. Her knees sag under her. The ray of light has followed them, but faintly.]

MAGISTER [*to DRAGHIGNAZZO*]. Careful with the ray. . . Stronger current.

[*When MIMA at last reaches the front of the stage, she sinks down on the edge, one foot dangling over the platform as though she were on the bank of a stream. The effect is like that of a flower drooping on its stem. By this time, DRAGHIGNAZZO has so adjusted a mysterious ray that it is thrown upon them from a funnel in the orchestra pit. Now that MIMA is close to the audience, there is a faint suggestion of the manikin to be seen in her face—a doll-like something not quite human.*]

JANOS. Mima, I've been waiting for this moment . . . away from Alfons. Do you love me? Do you really love me?

MAGISTER [*to FARFARELLO*]. Quick! Connect her voice.

[*FARFARELLO has come across the platform, his instrument under his arm. He touches a button.*]

MIMA. Oh, yes. Didn't I let you shoot my husband? Isn't this wonderful? . . . Out with a man . . . all alone where no one can see us.

JANOS. It is wonderful.

MIMA. But isn't something missing? If you were to take me in your arms fiercely and roughly and crush me like a bone— Mmmm . . . [*Growls as though crushing a bone.*] Could that be what is missing?

JANOS. Yes.

MIMA. Then beg . . . beg very hard.

JANOS. I beg you. . .

[*He kisses her tenderly.*]

MAGISTER [*surveying them from the bridge*]. We've got that fellow under the rays, too. He can't see or hear us but he'll do exactly as we like.

[*JANOS suddenly takes MIMA in his arms and kisses her passionately, a long, long kiss.*]

ADJUTANT [*as the kiss continues*]. . . . eight — nine — ten — eleven — twelve — thirteen — fourteen — fifteen — sixteen — seventeen — eighteen — nineteen — twenty — twenty-one—

SOME OF THE IMPS IN THE MACHINE [*counting in unison with the ADJUTANT*]. Twenty-two — twenty-three — twenty-four — twenty-five —

MAGISTER'S VOICE. Open.

[*The reflection of the flames is shown.*]

ALFONS [*calling from the mill, peeking out*]. Mima! Mima, where are you?

[*MIMA and JANOS stop kissing, annoyed.*]

MAGISTER'S VOICE. Close.

[*The reflector plates fall back.*]

MIMA. What is it?

ALFONS' VOICE. Great news! The judge has just granted your divorce.

MIMA. That's good news. But I do think you could have chosen a better time to tell me.

ALFONS. Congratulations!

[*With a squeaky laugh, he disappears.*]

JANOS. I'm tired of that fellow. Can we never be alone?

MIMA. Oh, if you're going to object to my friends, I'm not sure that I want to marry you. . . . Marriage [*Surveying her foot—coily.*] is a serious step for a young girl to take.

JANOS. It's quite evident to me that Alfons will be very unhappy when you're my wife.

MIMA. Oh, isn't it a nice feeling to know . . .

[*Suddenly there is a splutter and the light on MIMA goes out. A ray from elsewhere falls faintly on JANOS. MIMA suddenly stiffens, blinks her eyes and begins to turn into a manikin. JANOS, absorbed in his own thoughts, does not notice MIMA.*]

MAGISTER. Lights! Lights! What are you doing, Draghignazzo? She's passing out. More current. . . .

[*DRAGHIGNAZZO makes a connection.*]

MIMA. A—a nice feeling to know that you've made a man very unhappy. . . . [*Puts her arms round JANOS.*] I swear to you, there never, never was anything serious between Alfons and me. He comes to see me often, but professionally you might say . . . like a doctor with his little valise.

JANOS. I'm not asking questions about the past.

MIMA. Well, I swear just the same. He kissed my hands a few times—bit me, you know, but we never went further than that. No indeed, I wouldn't let him. . . . You believe me, don't you?

JANOS. I—I believe you, yes.

MIMA. That isn't enough. You must swear that you believe that Alfons and I were never . . . were never . . . you know what I mean.

JANOS. I swear.

MIMA. True, we *did* spend a summer together—

JANOS. We? Who?

MIMA. My husband and I—with Alfons. At that time I simply loathed my husband and Alfons and I— Oh, I suppose I was half mad. . . . But it was only that one summer . . . and only for one week . . . one month . . . I swear that's the truth. Now you won't believe me . . . you won't trust me. . . .

JANOS. I do, but . . .

MIMA. Swear that you believe me.

JANOS. I—I swear.

MIMA. That isn't enough. I want you to swear, on your father's grave, that you believe I wasn't too friendly with Alfons . . . longer than a month.

[*JANOS lowers his head, hesitating.*]

MAGISTER. Make haste, Draghignazzo, five points up on your ray.

[*The light on MIMA and JANOS increases.*]

MIMA. Swear that you believe my affair with Alfons lasted only a week.

JANOS. A moment ago you insisted that you and he were never—

MIMA. Swear to me that you believe my affair with Alfons lasted only a week and that it's over.

[*JANOS is silent.*]

MAGISTER. What's the matter, Draghignazzo? More juice . . . more juice. Double the current.

[*The ray grows very bright.*]

MIMA. I want you to swear that you believe my affair with Alfons lasted only a week.

JANOS [*yielding with a shame-faced look*]. I swear it.

MAGISTER. At last! He accepts her lover.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds. The clock hands show that half an hour has passed.*]

ADJUTANT. Rather low, I call him.

IMPS. Heel! Heel!

MAGISTER. Sh. . . . Go on.

JANOS. Mima, let's forget everything. . . . Marry me and . . . oh, if we only could find some quiet spot away from every one where we—

MIMA [*makes a face like a baby, getting ready to cry*]. I don't want to find such a spot . . . away from everybody and everything.

JANOS. Don't you want to be alone with me?

MIMA. Oh, no! [*She rises, the light following her.*] I want excitement, thrills, every forbidden pleasure. I want—I want— [*Changing suddenly.*] Janos: you're not rich enough.

JANOS [*rising. He, too, is picked up by a light*]. I'm going to be. Alfons has flooded the market with my Kata iron stock. It is damnable robbery.

MIMA. If you want me, you'll have to get rich quick.

MAGISTER. Switch number four—the stock exchange. Forward.

JANOS. What's all that rumbling?

MIMA [*with shining face*]. The stock exchange. To-day's our day.

VOICE OF THE FIRST BROKER [*in the machine*]. I offer Kata.

VOICE OF THE SECOND BROKER. I buy Kata.

[*Many voices are heard.*]

JANOS. The Kata stock. . . . It's on the market now. The swindle's launched. [*You can almost feel the*

machine grinding his conscience to pieces—it fairly groans.] Oh, what have I done? . . . Thousands will starve.

MIMA. Oh, oh, I'm so happy!

MAGISTER. Follow her with your eye.

[*It is about all DRAGHIGNAZZO can do to keep MIMA covered. At times he shoots a rose light at her and as she leaves it, she is caught up by a violet ray. The rays are kaleidoscopic as she goes hither and thither, in fact a story is told in lights.*]

MIMA. Oh, to be so rich that we could buy islands, continents, for a love nest.

JANOS. But—

MIMA. I want money, money. . . . [*She hears the hubbub of the stockbrokers in the machine: "I buy Kata! Fifty thousand! Seventy thousand! Eighty! One hundred thousand! Two hundred thousand!"*] Hear them? Buy. . . . Buy. . . . Sell. . . . Sell. . . . [*To JANOS.*] Kiss me. . . .

JANOS [*overwhelmed by his guilt*]. I'm a thief.

MIMA. But you can buy me everything I want. [*Cries come from the machine: "Buy Kata. . . . Five millions! . . . Six! . . . Eight! . . . Ten! Twenty!"*] You're worth millions.

JANOS. Oh, what a filthy thief I am!

MIMA. Never mind, I'll scamper before you in a spring garden of Damascus roses—blown and tossed about like a flower—dancing, laughing, loving, with nothing to cover me but my hair and a mantle of moonlight.

[*Two muffled shots are heard in the machine.*]

JANOS. Fathers, brothers — men killing themselves because of me. [*Another muffled shot is heard and a woman screams.*] Women and children left to die of hunger. O God!

MIMA [*as a shot sounds, putting her hand on her good heart*]. I felt that. . . .

MAGISTER. Look out for her good heart.

MIMA. Don't do it, Janos. Give the money back. After all, we can pull through in an attic. [*He groans.*] I don't need anything. . . . I don't eat much. . . . I can live on dry bread. Don't take the money, don't take it, don't.

[DRAGHIGNAZZO, following instructions, throws a green ray on MIMA.]

MIMA. Don't— [*Changing, as the green light is full on her.*] You take that money or I'll leave you, you soft-hearted fool.

[*She starts to go.*]

JANOS. No, no, you shan't leave me.

[*He kneels at her feet.*]

MIMA. Well, then, take the money. Give me everything I want.

[*Voices are still heard in the machine.*]

JANOS. Oh, is there no God to whom I can pray!

[*The devils wince.*]

MIMA. No, fool. [*She strikes him.*] Who's God? What's God? There is no God. I am God now because you're kneeling to me. [*Then with a change.*] Darling, sweetheart, dearest, Mima loves you . . . [*Coaxingly.*] . . . she wants you to be rich — oh, do be rich for her sake. [*Then sweeping on.*] I want—I want a castle with no windows and a thou-

sand cushions, set in a grove of spice trees with our murmurs of love whistling through them and a cistern filled to the brim with rose water—buy it for me. And I want a black room with red birds in jade cages—plumed fish and a flying carriage full of money—get it. I want a path of slaves to walk on and shoutings of glory under my windows. [*She blinks like a manikin.*] Here I am! If you want me—buy me. I'll love you because you have money. Spend, spend—the more you spend, the more I'll give—give—till your head reels, your breath stops and you'll die of longing for me. I'll give you kiss for kiss, throb for throb—all the bliss of my body, but only for money. [*Her ecstasy of spending lends speed to her tongue, as she sweeps on.*] I want to ride in a gilded carriage with ten, no, twenty white horses with black tails and red harnesses, and an elephant with a castle on its back full of bells and drums and canopies hanging all round. . . . But most of all, I want—I want— Oh, I want the stars above for buttons on my gown . . . some one told me about them—how they twinkle. . . . I want them—give them to me, please, please, please, and I'll die of passion on your heart like a rose. . . . Kiss me. . . . Give me—give me—give me—give me everything.

[*Voices are bellowing in the machine: "Forty millions! Fifty millions! Fifty millions! . . . Katal Sixty! Seventy! I buy Katal Ninety millions!"*]

JANOS. Yes, yes, yes, and blessed be the filthy, cursed money because of you. I worship it. I prostrate myself before it.

[*He kneels, facing the machine*]

with bowed head, the abject slave of money.]

MAGISTER. His soul for money.

IMPS. Hee! Hee! Wow! Wow—!

[FARFARELLO and RUBICANTE close the stock exchange.]

MIMA. Come, come, darling, get up. Hurry; we're losing time. Let us be married. Come: let us go to the altar.

[A peal of wedding bells is heard from the inside of the mill. Two imps hasten on and disrobe MIMA. While one imp removes her dress, another pulls off her stockings. As they leave, two other imps come on with a wedding dress, white stockings and slippers. When her gown and stockings are on, the first two imps return: one carries a wedding wreath and the other holds the long bridal veil which hangs over the wreath like a cloud. MIMA is dressed as one would dress a doll. She has given no assistance, but now reaches up for the wreath as though to crown herself. Strains of nuptial music are heard.]

MAGISTER. Open. [MIMA's face is illumined by the glow of Hell fires as the disks are lifted and she sets the wreath coyly on her head.] Close.

[The disks drop.]

MIMA. Oh, but I have no pearls! I can't be married without pearls.

[HIS MAJESTY volunteers to give her a long string of black pearls such as were never seen on land or sea. The ADJUTANT hands them to an imp who is sent forward by MAGISTER who bows, much pleased by the gift to his super-

manikin. The imp hands the pearls to MIMA. A red card is attached to them.]

ADJUTANT. There. . . She has her black pearls.

MIMA [reading from the card]. "A king died for them; a robber dipped his hands in blood for them; a slave lost his head for defending them; a prince betrayed his throne to buy them for a match girl." Now they're mine. I'll wear them.

[The scene darkens for a moment. Wedding bells are heard. A church organ plays. MIMA, suddenly changing, enacting the part of a bride, joins JANOS.]

JANOS [taking her hand]. Before all men, we agree to be united as one body and one soul. Mima: you are beginning a new life with me.

MIMA. Yes, my lord and master.

JANOS. You are all mine . . . every glance, every sigh . . . your eyes, your lips, your beauty, body and soul—all are mine.

MIMA. All yours, my lord and master.

JANOS. We will be one till death do us part.

MIMA. Till death do us part.

ADJUTANT [charmed]. Bigamy!

[As they walk to the sound of the wedding march, the center cylinder is opened by RUBICANTE, but only wide enough to allow ILONKA to appear. She carries a dish in her hand which she holds under her shawl.]

ILONKA. Janos, my dear husband, where have you been? Why don't you come home to supper? It's all ready for you, dear. Don't let it grow cold. What have I done that

you forget your vows made at the altar? Has the little unborn child no claim upon you? [*Kneels before him.*] Come home, Janos. Please come home.

JANOS. No, I will not.

[*ILONKA rises in tears.*]

MIMA. Do you know that poor woman? . . . Who is she?

JANOS. I don't know her. Some beggar. I never saw her before.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds. The clock shows that thirty-five minutes of the hour are gone.*]

ADJUTANT [*to SATAN*]. He has refused to recognize his wife.

MAGISTER. Not only that, Your Majesty, but his unborn child.

JANOS. Come, Mima.

[*He tries to take MIMA into the church. Her hand is creeping to her good heart as she goes to ILONKA.*]

MIMA. My poor, poor woman, don't cry.

MAGISTER [*to SATAN*]. Don't pay any attention to her. She'll get over it.

MIMA. And to think you have his supper ready!

ILONKA. Yes, it has always been ready. Creamed cabbage just as he likes it.

MIMA. That's why you lost him.

ILONKA. But I've cooked for him for years. I was his slave.

MIMA. Well, look at him!

[*JANOS is standing holding out his arms to MIMA.*]

ILONKA. Oh!

[*She cries pitifully.*]

MIMA. Don't you know that men don't love the women who cook for them and stand by them? . . . No, they love the women who take every-

thing they can get and ask for more.

ILONKA. Oh!

MIMA. The next time you'll know better. [*She gradually comes under the influence of the evil light.*] Oh, well, I can't let you stop my wedding procession. Please go away. [*As ILONKA, weeping, goes, MIMA looks after her and calls.*] Don't worry, I'll make him pay for everything he ever did to you.

[*She opens her eyes wide, with just a hint of the manikin stare, then coyly draws her wedding veil over her face. The "Lohengrin" wedding march swells out and voices sing to it: "Here comes the bride." The center cylinder is opened and we see the inside of the church.*]

ALFONS has suddenly appeared in the church. He is the best man. He follows MIMA and JANOS. The church doors close behind them, shutting out all sound.]

THE END OF THE SECOND PART

[*MAGISTER comes from the bridge and speaks confidentially to the devils of the court.*]

MAGISTER. May I be permitted to make a suggestion?

ADJUTANT. Certainly.

MAGISTER. May I propose that we connect the time wheels and let the belts run for ten minutes—meaning that days and weeks—or let us say that an interval of six months is speeding by—

ADJUTANT. May His Majesty smoke during these six months?

MAGISTER [*bowing profoundly*].

By all means. In ten minutes, we shall pick up MIMA in the machine and see what this fellow will do next. Until then—

ADJUTANT. Never mind the band. We'll saunter about a bit.

MAGISTER. We'll blow a whistle when we're ready.

ADJUTANT. Quite right.

[*The royal party saunters off. The red curtain in front of the mill is lowered. MALACODA and the imps disappear. The stage is empty during the*

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PART THREE

[SCENE I: *The whistle blows in the darkness to notify SATAN and his court that all is ready for them.*

The clock, which is for a moment illuminated, shows that only twenty-two minutes are left of the fatal hour.

As the lights go up, we find the devils again in the orchestra pit. They have taken their places in the semi-darkness. MAGISTER comes on and stands, his back to the audience, observing the following scene, first saying to SATAN, "Pardon me, Your Majesty."]

MAGISTER. Malacoda?

MALACODA [*appearing on the bridge of the mill, coming out of the darkness*]. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. What does your time wheel record at this instant?

MALACODA. Exactly six months have passed.

MAGISTER. Stop it. Get back to your job.

[MALACODA obeys.]

ADJUTANT. Our hero must be fit for the ash-heap by this time.

MAGISTER. Yes, sir. He has had a great fling for six months and now, with Your Majesty's permission, we propose to show him penniless and broke.

ADJUTANT. As we might say,

Your Majesty, from the altar to the dust-bin.

MAGISTER. Exactly, sir. [*Calls.*] Ready, Rubicante? [RUBICANTE appears at his lever.] Are the great fires roaring?

RUBICANTE. Roaring.

MAGISTER. Attention . . . [*To workers on the machine.*] Concentrate all rays on one spot. . . The color mixing heat to the melting point. [*They make adjustments. MAGISTER comes forward with a chair with a hand-hole. To SATAN.*] Excuse me, sir. [*Sits with his back to the orchestra pit, calling.*] Malacoda, give me the sea and some sunshine—and add a few flowers.

MALACODA [*telephoning to below. As he calls, the colors shoot up through the tubes on the machine*]. Colors: blue like the sea . . . blue like the sky . . . white like marble . . . red, green, yellow, violet, carmine. . . Sunshine and ocean. Got that?

[*By this time the last color shoots up.*]

MAGISTER. Stringed instruments, softly—sweetly.

MALACODA [*telephoning*]. Musicians. Violins, violas, 'cellos. Have the music sweet like pain.

MAGISTER. Report.

RUBICANTE [*looking into the interior of the machine at the scene which we do not see*]. The colors are flaming, master. The sun is shining, the ocean phosphorescent. The air is mild like honey.

MALACODA. The bows tenderly whisk over the strings.

MAGISTER. Are the flowers blooming?

RUBICANTE. They bloomed punctually on the moment, master.

ADJUTANT [*sniffing*]. I can smell a rose. Extraordinary!

[*Sweet strains of music are heard inside the machine. Imps come from the shadows exclaiming: "Music. Sweet, sweet, sweet like pain. Heel! Heel! Heel!" They squat, facing the machine. A half-naked devil pitchforks them out of sight.*]

MAGISTER. Now, then: attention.

RUBICANTE. Ready?

THOSE ON THE MACHINE. Ready.

MAGISTER [*calling like a showman.*]
Allez!

[*MAGISTER ascends the steps and takes his place on the machine. As RUBICANTE moves his levers, the three cylinders open and we see a stretch of beach showing*

[SCENE II: *A gambling resort on the shores of the Great Sulphur Sea (modeled after Monte Carlo).*

The sun is shining, the sky is bright, the sea is phosphorescent, but there is a curious sulphurous gleam to it. A bench is flanked by a few flowers. A czardas is being played in the Casino.

JANOS comes slowly on, his hat pulled over his eyes. He wears

shabby clothing, a faded shirt, no cuffs, no tie. His despondent attitude shows him greatly changed since we last saw him. He is a tragic figure. He sits on the bench, ignoring the gay music.

An OLD WOMAN enters, selling a few little bunches of flowers and newspapers.]

OLD WOMAN. Down in your luck, eh? Been gambling in the Casino?

JANOS. No.

OLD WOMAN. Get along with you! That's all people come here for—to gamble.

JANOS. I'm broke.

OLD WOMAN. What are you going to bet with?

JANOS. My life, I suppose.

OLD WOMAN. Who wants your life?

JANOS. Every one. [*Catching a glimpse of a headline in one of the papers she carries.*] May I look at your newspaper?

OLD WOMAN. Two sous.

JANOS. Haven't got it. . . .

OLD WOMAN. You are broke.

[*She lets him have the paper.*]

JANOS [*reading*]. "Janos Janosi of the Kata Iron Mines swindle, is still a fugitive from justice. The police—"

[*He starts as a gendarme passes, hiding his face behind the paper. The gendarme turns his head—stares at JANOS, showing big, suspicious eyes. He repeats all that he has done in the manikin parade, then disappears.*]

OLD WOMAN [*knowingly*]. So that's how it is, eh? Got any friends here?

JANOS. I came after the woman who ran away from me.

OLD WOMAN. After a woman—and no money. . . . Ha, ha, ha, ha!

[Laughs and goes off.]

JANOS [reading]. "The police are searching the large cities. His creditors are in possession of his property. His wife, the notorious Mima, has deserted him. The amazing history of this scoundrel—"

[He crushes the paper as though to destroy it, when MIMA enters. She is dressed in a very smart costume grown shabby. She is penniless. Sauntering about, she sees a man in the distance, and raises and lowers her parasol several times as though to urge him to follow her.]

MIMA. What's the matter with the men in this place? Are they sexless? [She saunters across the stage again, looking off. Lighting her last cigarette, she draws a puff luxuriously. She notices JANOS.] Ah—here you are. . . . Ha! I knew you'd follow me. I knew you couldn't keep away.

JANOS. Mima, how could you leave me? Mima, how could you run away? You're mine.

[He takes her in his arms and kisses her.]

MIMA. Very well, dearie, only don't interfere with business. Sit down here . . . move over.

[She sits beside him on the bench.]

JANOS. What is this business?

MIMA. You were rich when I married you. Now you're broke. I've got to look out for myself and for you, too.

JANOS. Mima!

MIMA. Here. [She gives him a

puff of her cigarette.] How'd you get the money to follow me?

JANOS. I carried a valise for a man and robbed him.

MIMA [with a hint of the manikin in her laughter]. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

THE ADJUTANT. Ha! Ha!

THE DEVILS IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT. Ha! Ha! Ha!

ADJUTANT [as the imps join in, shrieking]. Sh!

MIMA. You don't ask me what luck I've had. I'll tell you. When I ran away from you, I came here. The very first night I lost everything, gambling. I had to pawn my clothes. I've walked the streets and smiled at men till my face aches.

JANOS [horrified. After a pause]. Where's Alfons?

MIMA. The dirty dog! He ran off with the pawn tickets. I'm through with him. Now I'll stick to you. How I hate him! That gendarme's staring at us. I hope he doesn't suspect. . . . Your face is in every paper.

JANOS. When I think of the shame I've brought on my name, I—

MIMA. Well, I'm on the streets for you now, am I not?

JANOS. Oh, Mima!

MIMA. We must have something to eat, mustn't we? Have you got it? Now you mustn't interfere and I'll be a good little wife to you. Kiss me. [She kisses him, then jumps up to speak to an unseen man.] How de do, Mister, looking for a nice girl? . . . Coming my way?

MAN'S VOICE [off; drunkenly]. No, my dear. Perhaps later, when the m-moon's out.

MIMA. Oh, but I've taken such a fancy to you. [By this time, the sunlight is turning to a rosy shade.] Come along, come along, sweetheart,

Oh, don't run away, dearie. . . . Wait—Hey! Ah! You big— [To JANOS.] He was so nice and drunk. . . . [As JANOS moves uneasily, overcome by shame.] Ha! Ha! We don't care how we get money, do we? Ha! Ha! [Digging him in the ribs.] Laugh. . . . Laugh. . . . ! [He sits glumly.] Oh, don't then. I'm not very happy myself. I've come down, too. I'm getting pretty low when my heart's not in my profession. My clothes look shabbier every day. Nobody'll want me soon. [Suddenly rebelling against her fate.] I'm not going home to a lover in a ratty bedroom and take a beating because I didn't earn any money.

JANOS. Mima!

MIMA. Well, it'll come to that. You needn't be so high and mighty with me—you're a thief, yourself.

JANOS [in agony]. Don't, Mima. If I am caught and sent away for a long time—

MIMA. Don't worry. I'll stand by you. It's such a safe feeling to be unfaithful to a man who is in jail.

JANOS. What has come over me that I sit here and listen. What curse is laid upon me that—

MIMA. Here am I trying so hard— [One would think from her tone that she was doing something noble.]—and not one word of encouragement do I get from you. [She cries a little. He doesn't notice her; she cries a little louder.] Oh, dear, oh, dear, I haven't a friend in the world. Nobody loves me. [His hand steals into hers.] Oh, Janos, darling. [A smart French cocotte comes strolling on. She waves her handkerchief over her shoulder as though inviting some man to follow her.] Here you! This is my beat. Get out! [The cocotte ignores

MIMA.] Hop! Pick another boulevard. *Va t'en!* [The cocotte goes off.] Oh, I haven't made my room rent to-day. How de do? [A man appears—old enough to know better.] Pleasant weather. [It is now night. A very bright moon shines.] Lovely evening. Looking for a nice girl?

MAN. Yes. Do me the favor to come over to my hotel.

MIMA. Where are you stopping, dearie?

MAN. The Grand.

MIMA. That's a swell place. I'll run back and tell mother I shall be out late. Meet you at the Grand. Ah, stand me a taxi there and back, do, and give me something for the driver.

MAN. Sure you'll come?

MIMA. You couldn't keep me away, darling.

MAN. Seeing's believing. [Giving her some money.] That's all you'll get now. Ask for Topandy.

MIMA. I'll be there. [The man goes off.] Stingy! Here— [To JANOS, offering him the money.] That's for you, dearie. [He refuses it with abhorrence.] What's the matter? I earned that honestly. Ah, take it. Clean up and get a shave. [She forces the money into his hand.] Take it.

JANOS. Thank you.

[As he finally accepts it and rises, the deadly sin signal sounds.]

THE IMPS. Hee! Hee!

[MAGISTER has turned the light on the clock which shows nineteen minutes of the hour.]

ADJUTANT [to SATAN]. A pimp.

MAGISTER [with pride]. Just that, if you'll allow me to express my opinion, sir.

ADJUTANT. He's the lowest scum of the earth.

[MIMA motions JANOS to silence.

He slinks down on the bench, his hat over his eyes.

MAGISTER holds up his hands to indicate that some one is coming on. ALFONS enters—smoking a cigarette in a very long, bizarre holder. He is a howling swell. He has a monocle in his puppet eye, his pearl gray striped trousers are creased perfectly. He wears a tight-waisted coat, with a flower in his buttonhole, a silk hat, fiery red necktie and gray gloves.]

MIMA [*who has partly turned her back to him to use her lipstick*]. How de do, Mister. . . Want a nice girl? I could love you. [*She recognizes ALFONS.*] Why, you sneaking, rat-footed, run-away! It's Alfons, Janos.

ALFONS. Mima!

MIMA. You're a fine one—stealing my pawn tickets! [*Pointing to JANOS.*] And here's the friend you deserted.

ALFONS [*raising his monocle*]. So it is . . . in rags. . . . [*Offering the tips of his fingers.*] How are you, Janos?

JANOS [*refusing to shake hands*]. Is there no corner of the world where I can be rid of your smirking face?

ALFONS. Do you know, old fellow, there's a price on your head? The police are—

JANOS. They can have me.

MIMA. Alfons: have you any money, dear?

ALFONS. No, but I know how you can get some.

JANOS [*in disgust*]. Ah!

MIMA. Listen to Alfons, dearie. He's shrewd.

[*The gay strains of a czardas are very faintly heard from a cabaret.*]

ALFONS [*pointing off*]. There's a famous cabaret. . . . You can dance there and I'll introduce you to rich men. I know a lot of them—princes, too.

MIMA [*wide-eyed—eager*]. Yes?

ALFONS. Janos can break down the door and collect damages after they've taken you to their rooms. He's the husband.

MIMA [*delighted*]. If that isn't a good idea—I don't know what is.

ALFONS. Come along, Mima.

JANOS. Ah, you grinning jackal!

[*He lunges at ALFONS.*]

MIMA. Janos! Janos!

JANOS. I'll take you by the throat—jump into the sea with you and end it all.

[*He has ALFONS by the throat.*]

MIMA. Don't! Don't! Let him go. [*As JANOS lets go of ALFONS.*] You're selfish. The idea! What's to become of me?

ALFONS. The brute. . . . [*To MIMA, as he arranges his tie.*] Just as I saw a way out of this for us all. . . . [*Finding his hat.*] I'm through.

MIMA. No, no, don't go. [*To JANOS.*] Keep quiet. [*As music sounds in the cabaret.*] Why, I can sell myself over and over again in that cabaret.

ALFONS. You can if Janos will help us.

MIMA. Oh, he'll help us. You'll break in the door, won't you, Janos?

JANOS. No.

[*He sits moodily on the bench.*]

MIMA. But it won't make any difference to us, dearie; I'll come back to you every night. We'll be just as happy.

JANOS. No.

ALFONS. Oh, kick him out. Get rid of him.

MIMA [*to* ALFONS]. You mind your own business. Let him alone. [*To* JANOS—*coaxingly*.] Now listen to Mima: you stay at home and sleep and I'll bring in the money. You'll be the best kept man in the world. All you'll have to do is to kick in a door now and then, darling.

ALFONS. Here's the key to my hotel room. Wear some of my clothes. You mustn't look like a beggar.

MIMA [*taking the key and putting it in* JANOS' hand]. Here, lovey.

JANOS [*dropping the key*]. No, I can't do it.

MIMA. I was willing to tramp the streets for you. My lips are sore with the dirty kisses of men. I turn out the lights because my shirt is full of holes and my stockings have no feet in them. Now *you* do something for me. Break in a door and find me in my lover's arms and make him pay. [*Whining*.] We're poor. I'm hungry. You've got to do your part.

JANOS. I'll give myself up first. [*Calls off*.] Officer? [*To* MIMA.] I'll tell them who I am and end it. [*The gendarme enters in answer to the call. JANOS steps up to him*.] Officer—

MIMA [*under her breath to* JANOS]. Ingrate! [*Then sauntering up to the officer*.] Sorry I haven't had better luck. [*Looks in her bag*.] No money to-day, but I won't forget you to-morrow, sweetheart. [*The gendarme looks enquiringly at* JANOS.] Come Alfons, let Janos go with the officer. Introduce me to your rich friends and we'll pick up another husband.

JANOS. It's nothing, officer.

[*The gendarme passes on. By this time, it is night*.]

MIMA [*to* ALFONS]. Kiss me, darling. . . . O God!

[*When MIMA says: "O God!" there is a commotion in the pit. The ADJUTANT rises and looks indignantly at* MAGISTER *who is very apologetic*.]

MAGISTER [*to* ADJUTANT. She's heard him say it so often that—

[*The ADJUTANT sits*.]

MIMA [*to* ALFONS]. Oh, oh, oh, how I love you. . . . [*Embraces him*.] My mate forever. . . . I'll burn you with my kisses. . . . [*She kisses him innumerable times*.] Come to the cabaret, Alfons. I'll dance.

[*A czardas is played and MIMA dances across the stage and off, laughing as she disappears. ALFONS follows her. The czardas ends. JANOS, with a hang-dog look, picks up the key, pulls his hat over his eyes and goes off. The deadly sin signal sounds*.]

ADJUTANT [*to* HIS MAJESTY]. He can't sink any lower. [*MAGISTER has turned a light on the clock. It lacks but seventeen minutes of the hour*.] Your machine is perfection. [*To* SATAN.] We admit it? [*SATAN nods his head*.] We admit it.

ALL THE COURT. We admit it.

ADJUTANT. Why there won't be one decent person left up there. We'll have them all down here with us, Your Majesty. The world is ours.

IMPS. Heel! Heel!

DEVILS IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT. Ours! Ours!

IMPS [*flying about—fluttering*]. Heel! Heel!

[*Dancing devilkins and devilets leap up from the shadows and*

execute the movements of a hellish bacchanal and vanish.]

MAGISTER. Attention. . . . Rubicante?

RUBICANTE. Yes, master?

MAGISTER. Let me hear the fires. [*As the disks are lifted, we hear the terrific roar and licking of flames. The entire audience is suffused by a flickering red glow. The disks are heard to close.*] Hundred and eighty thousand amperes. Tune up the great spark-gap.

RUBICANTE [*telephoning*]. Hundred and eighty thousand amperes. The great spark-gap.

MAGISTER. Now give us the cabaret. . . . Report.

RUBICANTE [*looking down into the scene*]. The night is dark, master. 'Tis late. The violins cry. Joy shrieks aloud, wine is flowing. And Mima—

MAGISTER [*anxiously*]. What?

RUBICANTE. Her pulse—

MAGISTER [*quickly*]. A shot of caffeine into the hearts. High voltage. Start the music. . . . Who's that crying? [*Looking off.*] Oh. . . . Send that lady up home, we shan't need her any longer. Good night, dear madam. [*To the ADJUTANT.*] His wife, Ilonka. [*To RUBICANTE.*] Now then, ready. [*To MALACODA.*] Music.

[*A cylinder revolves as the lights go up.*]

[SCENE III: *In the cabaret. A black room with a red door. Two red wine glasses stand on the blood red table.*

Two red chairs are drawn up to the table.

ALFONS *is discovered in full evening dress—smoking. He stands on the steps, looking off through a cur-*

tained glass panel in the red door. A sensuous tango is being played. When the dance comes to an end, there is applause and cries of "Mimal La Mimal!" The dance begins again. ALFONS draws the curtains, goes to the red table, and looks over a number of cards.

A waiter suddenly opens the red door—a burst of dance music coming in with him.

The following scene is played rapidly, but with a certain air of finality. The whole story has been planned and is now drawing to a close.]

WAITER. La Mima dances like a leaf in a flame.

[*As he offers another card to ALFONS, faint cries of "Vival" "Vival" are heard.*]

ALFONS. Who is it now?

WAITER. A prince's card this time.

ALFONS [*reading*]. "His Serene Highness begs Monsieur Alfons to arrange a meeting with La Mima." Waiter, look: [*He spreads out the cards.*] Which man of them all could least afford a scandal? A king's card, a duke's, a banker's, a—

WAITER. His Serene Highness.

ALFONS. Who has the most money?

WAITER. His Serene Highness.

ALFONS. In ten minutes—here. . . . Tell La Mima.

[*As the waiter opens the red door, MIMA's dance is ending. A shriek is heard. The music stops.*]

WAITER. Ah!

MAGISTER [*nervously*]. Mima. . . . The ray—the ray.

[*The music begins again. JANOS enters from the left through a black door in the wall. He wears one of ALFONS' over-*

coats over his own shabby clothes and carries a silk hat belonging to ALFONS. He is a pathetic figure in the ill-fitting coat.]

ALFONS. Ah, just in time, Janos.

JANOS [*ashamed of himself*]. Here. The key to your room.

ALFONS [*taking it*]. My clothes don't fit you very well, I see. Now then, I have a princely door for you to kick in.

JANOS. Oh!

[He sinks into a chair—his head in his hands, crushed, humiliated. Despite his downfall, the thought of blackmail terrifies him.]

ALFONS. Hotel Grand, Suite 10 . . . a Serene Highness, married, noted for his piety. Hang round till I give the signal, then follow them, kick in the door and ask for a king's ransom. It will cost him his principality if he doesn't consent.

JANOS. I can't. I won't. What are you trying to do to me?

ALFONS. To help you, you pauper. Wait in there.

[He gestures toward the back. There is an unearthly shriek of a violin and the space at the back is instantly illuminated by a strong, reddish glow.]

JANOS [*shuddering—not looking*]. What's that?

[Through the opening, we see beautiful women of vampire types dancing with dissolute men. They keep their faces to the audience, moving somewhat mechanically. The violins give an occasional wail.]

ALFONS. Oh, that? [*Lightly*]. That's only the dance of the damned

. . . been going on for ages. Pay no attention.

JANOS. They're staring at me.

ALFONS. Don't stare at the gentleman. Don't you know it's very impolite? [*To JANOS.*] They think you want to join them. [*The light at the back fades away. The dancers grin at JANOS as they vanish.*] Mima is finishing her tango. His Highness will follow her. Hide yourself, Janos.

JANOS. No, no, I can't go on with it.

ALFONS. Oh, then join in the dance of the damned. [*Pointing to the unseen dancers.*] They wouldn't rob and steal and cheat and lie 'till too late. That's their punishment—join them by all means.

[A violin wails as though to let JANOS know that there is no pause in the weary dance.]

JANOS. Yes, yes, I will break down the door. . . . I can't wait to do it. Then I shall have money; I shall take Mima away; I shall hide her where men will never see her face. Don't follow us, Alfons, I warn you. . . . Oh, Alfons, if there is a trace of human feeling left in your heart, forget us both after to-night.

[JANOS disappears behind the black curtain. MIMA's dance has come to an end amidst cries of "La Mimal!" and "Vival!" As ALFONS pushes the door wide open, he backs away into the shadows. MIMA appears on the steps, wearing a silver cloak over her dancing costume. She is a dazzling picture; sensuous, tempting. The devils in the orchestra pit draw an almost inaudible breath of admiration at her appearance. As she looks to-

ward ALFONS, she quickly makes the gesture of applying her thumb to her nose, and darts down the steps into the room.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS enters.

He is a big six-foot fair man with a beard and flaming eyes, pale with passion. He wears conventional evening dress, a vivid scarlet ribbon across his waistcoat and a number of orders. He never takes his eyes off MIMA. MIMA lets her cloak drop from her shoulders revealing herself in the dancing costume. It is bizarre and unusual (showing glimpses of her body.)

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS. What strange power drew me to this place to find you . . . bids me forget my kingdom to cry out—when? When?

MIMA. To-night.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS. I would die for one hour in your beautiful arms.

MIMA. Well, of course. A thousand men are burning up for me but I had my eye on you.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS. Ah! [*He would seize her, but she dances away on her toes. At her call, a gypsy fiddler steps quickly into the room, drawing a bow over the strings. She gives a cry and dances madly. At the close of the dance, the fiddler disappears.*] How long must I wait. . . . [*He picks up her cloak and wraps it round her, offering her his arm.*] Come.

MIMA. No one must know. . . . You must never, never tell. How wonderful to steal away with you . . . where we can look into each other's flaming eyes until our bodies burn! Oh, my dear, pardon me. [*Curtsies.*]

Your Highness—be sure to lock the door.

[*JANOS can now be seen in his hiding place, listening.*]

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS. I think you love me.

MIMA [*very solemnly—her hand uplifted—beginning the same old business*]. By my mother's grave, I—

[*But the light goes out suddenly as the imps giggle, anticipating more lies. The center cylinder is closed in the dark.*]

ADJUTANT. Now this will be interesting!

[*There is a stir of anticipation in the orchestra pit.*]

MAGISTER'S VOICE. Attention. . . . Rubicante, turn the time wheels thirty minutes ahead. Make haste. . . . Report. . . . Well?

RUBICANTE'S VOICE [*in the dark*]. Speed number 90.

MAGISTER'S VOICE. Report.

RUBICANTE'S VOICE. Grand Hotel—suite 10.

MAGISTER. Are they there?

RUBICANTE. Yes.

MAGISTER. Well?

RUBICANTE. I cannot see . . . they've just turned out the light.

MAGISTER. Where is Janos?

[*A loud knocking is heard.*]

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS' VOICE. Who is at the door? . . . What do you want?

JANOS' VOICE. My wife.

MIMA'S VOICE [*with feigned alarm*]. My husband. Oh! Oh! My husband has followed us.

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS' VOICE. Your husband?

MIMA'S VOICE. He'll kill us. Oh!

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS' VOICE. Sh! [*As the knocking continues.*] How

dare you, sir? Do you know who I am? I shall call the gendarmes.

JANOS. Open the door.

[*A door is crashed in.*]

MIMA'S VOICE. Oh, Janos, my husband, forgive me, forgive me.

[*She sobs.*]

JANOS' VOICE. Scoundrel! You two vile—

MAGISTER. That'll do, Rubicante: we know the rest. [RUBICANTE turns the lever. MAGISTER throws a light on the clock which records fourteen minutes of the hour.] Be ready to pick them up outside the hotel, Draghignazzo. [*To the devils in the orchestra pit.*] Events will come and go quickly now.

[DRAGHIGNAZZO touches various instruments and a strange eerie light shows in front of the machine. The light increases until we see that it comes from a street lamp.]

MIMA'S LAUGHTER [*heard off*]. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha-ha!

ALFONS [*echoing*]. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha-ha!

MIMA'S LAUGHTER. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha-ha!

[MIMA enters wrapped in her silver cloak. Instantly DRAGHIGNAZZO shoots rays on them. They are bathed in light.]

ALFONS. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha-ha!

[MIMA holds on to the lamp-post convulsed with mirth.]

MIMA. Ha! Ha! Ha! . . . How much money do you think he got?

ALFONS. A fortune. They opened the hotel safe for His Highness. I peeked in.

MIMA. Some one's coming. . . . It's Janos. Let us go in.

MAGISTER [*to DRAGHIGNAZZO*]. Follow her to that garret of hers.

MIMA. Wait on the stairs, Alfons.

[*The rays follow MIMA and ALFONS until they pass into the machine. The cylinder is now fully open, disclosing*

[SCENE IV: *The garret bedroom of MIMA. It is a miserable place: it contains an iron bedstead, a single chair, a table, and a small lamp throwing out a dim light. A pale, cold ray of moonlight comes through the window. MIMA darts in pulling off her silver cloak, showing a negligée underneath which she has evidently picked up in the Prince's apartment.*]

MIMA. Good-bye to you, old garret.

[*She turns toward the door but JANOS doesn't come. She goes to the window—looks down. No sign of him. ALFONS enters stealthily.*]

ALFONS. What's keeping him?

MIMA. Where did he go? Why did you trust him with all that money? [*She looks down from the window.*] There . . . he's sneaking in the back way. I wish he would hurry. Oh, my fingers itch to touch that money.

ALFONS. More black pearls, pet?

MIMA. Oh, yes. . . . A string as long as my arm, and big ones.

ALFONS. You look out for him. He's going to take you away . . . shut you up . . . hide you.

MIMA. What?

ALFONS. He told me so to-night.

MIMA. Where I can't spend money?

ALFONS. Where you can't even see a man.

MIMA. Never! I won't be hidden

away where I can't dig my fingers into men's souls.

ALFONS. We'll have to get rid of Janos.

MIMA [*echoing*]. Get rid of—

ALFONS. But we must have the money first.

MIMA. Oh, I'll have the money. Sh! Let me talk to him.

ALFONS. I'll run and hide.

MIMA [*patting ALFONS' cheek*]. Yes, dear, just as you *always* do. Go in there.

[ALFONS goes into the cupboard.

JANOS enters.]

JANOS. No one saw me come in. Here. . . . [*He throws bank notes on the table.*] Here. . . .

MIMA. Oh . . . money, money, money, money, money.

JANOS. Here. . . . [*Throwing more money on the table.*] Here. . . . [*Producing a packet of papers.*] Royal notes—his dirty name's on them. That's all. There's your body-money.

MIMA. Oh! I always knew you'd do something wonderful.

JANOS [*pushing her away*]. Ach!

[JANOS goes to the bed—sits on it, his head in his hands.]

MIMA. You're not going to hide me away from other men, are you, dear?

JANOS. Stop it, you common prostitute.

MIMA. Are you going to do what I want you to—as you've always done? Of course you are. . . . Hold me in your arms. I'll put out the light.

[*He pushes her so violently that she falls into a chair.*]

JANOS. Ah, you—

MIMA [*coaxingly*]. Ah! [*She gets a bottle and a glass from under the*

bed.] Here, darling, drink this and be happy.

[*He drinks and, taking the bottle from her, fills the glass, drinking again.*]

JANOS [*rising*]. I'm going to bed to sleep and forget.

MIMA. I'll go with you, sweetheart.

JANOS. You sleep on the floor, you harlot.

MIMA. Ah, Janos. . . .

JANOS [*pushing her away*]. Come near me again to-night and I'll beat you.

MIMA. Do! I'll love you all the more. . . . Strike me—I don't mind, darling. Kiss me. . . . Come, sweetheart, sleep in my arms for an hour. I'll give you my body and the beatings of my hearts. . . . Come. [*The music starts up in the cabaret—a czardas with the ominous note of a drum in it.*] One hour. . . . Then we'll go back to the cabaret and dance and drink and be happy and rich.

[*She kisses him passionately.*]

JANOS. Oh—you—

[*Lifting his hand to strike her.*]

MIMA. Take me in your arms, darling—lover—thief—blackmailer—

JANOS. Damn your filthy thoughts! Over there in the corner . . . sleep on the floor.

MIMA. I won't. I'm going out.

JANOS. No, you're not going out to meet other men. To-morrow I'll take you where no one will know your common face and say: "I've had her." I'm going to make you decent and wash your dirty soul with my tears.

MIMA. Oh, no you're not. You'll go to sleep and I'll—

JANOS. You try it, you—

[*He strikes her. The czardas*

stops. Only the drum continues very faintly.

ADJUTANT [*rising—horrificed*]. Oh! Oh! His Majesty never could stand beating a woman. He's a brute.

[*Indignant exclamations are heard in the orchestra pit.*]

MAGISTER [*who has turned the light on the clock showing that it lacks twelve minutes of JANOS' fatal hour*]. Forward with your time wheels—pass over the rest of the row. Stop the drum. [*The drum is stopped. The music is faintly heard again.*] Forward.

JANOS [*drunkenly—threateningly*]. Going away with me and be decent?

MIMA [*lying—her eyes narrowing*]. Yes.

JANOS. You won't leave this room without me?

MIMA. No. . . . I'm undressing.

[*She slips into a white dress—the one she wore when she first appeared.*]

JANOS [*taking up the table cover with the money in it and twisting it into a bag*]. Where's rat face?

MIMA [*eyeing the cupboard*]. Rat face didn't come in.

JANOS [*putting the money under a pillow*]. Better not come in. [*Sprawling on the bed—his head on the pillow.*] Better not. . . . Better—

[*He falls into a drunken stupor. A slight pause.*]

MIMA. Janos. . . . [*No answer.*]

Janos. . . . [*No answer. The czar-das plays faintly. The closet door opens. MIMA, motioning to ALFONS to wait, goes to JANOS.*] Want me to kiss you to sleep, dearie? [*Giving him a vicious shove.*] Want me to kiss you to sleep? [*JANOS doesn't stir. She gestures to ALFONS to come out.*] Did you hear that dirty dog?

ALFONS. What did I tell you?

MIMA. You're right. I'll get the money and go with you. We'll run off.

ALFONS. And he'll follow us.

MIMA. Yes, of course he will. . . . We've got to be rid of him. [*ALFONS puts a pistol and a knife on the table and watches her. The green ray shifts to the table.*] Is that the way you mean?

ALFONS. I didn't say it: You said it. . . . Will you do it, Mima? [*MIMA is silent.*] The moment Janosi is dead, you'll have the world at your feet.

MIMA [*draws a finger over the pistol—her hand green in the light*]. One bullet would do it.

ALFONS. One would do it.

MIMA. But six would be surer.

ALFONS. Yes.

MIMA [*suddenly draws her finger away and puts her hand on her good heart*]. I've lived with him a long time.

ALFONS. What of it?

MIMA. That's true. . . . What of it? [*Her hand is now over her bad heart.*] The only difference would be that if he were dead I wouldn't see him about any more.

ALFONS. That's all . . . and you'd be young and rich and lovely forever.

MIMA. Yes, yes, of course. I could love him too when he was dead, couldn't I?

ALFONS [*eloquently*]. Why certainly.

MIMA. But he couldn't come between me and other men?

ALFONS. That's it.

MIMA. The police would take him anyway in the end.

ALFONS. Undoubtedly.

[JANOS rouses. *Dazed—not knowing where he is—he looks at MIMA and ALFONS.*]

MIMA. And once I was rid of Janos, you could be my lover, Alfons, couldn't you?

ALFONS. As I have always been.

MIMA. That's true. . . . What I liked most about you, was that I could always kick you out for some other man. Kiss me, my true love. [ALFONS kisses her. *The shock brings JANOS to his senses. He listens, lifting his head from the pillow.*] Very well, then. . . . I'll do it. When?

ALFONS. To-night.

MIMA. Now?

ALFONS. Now. We can leave him here dead and run away.

MIMA. Yes. . . . Get the money first—it mustn't have blood on it. [JANOS, *with a look of horror, groans and sinks back on the pillow. They turn to look at him; his eyes are closed. Reassured, they go on with their plans.*] Hide somewhere . . . there, behind the bed! I'll make him sit up. That'll be the sign. Then catch hold of his legs and I'll push him back. . . . When he's down—pierce his heart through and leave the knife in. [The ray now gleams on the knife on the table.] Go, my brave soldier. Oh, how I adore you. [ALFONS, *picking up the knife and pistol, goes behind the bed. JANOS has heard everything. He has taken his revolver, looked at it and put it where he can reach it without delay. Sweetly.*] Are you asleep, my darling Janos? [Tries to arouse him.] Janos. . . . Janos. . . .

JANOS. Yes . . . yes.

[Staggering to his feet, he stands in a peculiar attitude, looking at MIMA.]

MAGISTER [*coming down, gesturing to MALACODA to suspend action*]. Your Majesty: you have seen this man [*Indicating JANOS who stands motionless, looking at MIMA.*] live a life-time in forty-eight minutes, [*He indicates the clock which records twelve minutes of the hour.*] and, sinking lower and lower, commit one crime after another. Under the spell of my marvelous machine, he will now commit that last and most terrible crime—the crime of Cain—the blood crime—murder. [*The members of the devil's court show satisfaction. This is the one crime they want him to commit. MAGISTER resumes his place on the machine.*] Every switch in. Spark gap to the maximum. All at their posts. . . . Ready.

MIMA [*uneasily*]. What is it, Janos? Why do you stare at me? You're crying. Janos, kiss me . . . harder . . . longer. . . . Now sit here. . . . I want to say good night . . . and wish you a long, sweet sleep. [*He is now sitting on the bed. She puts her arms about him.*] Good night, lover.

JANOS. Good night.

MIMA. How strange you look! What is it? Don't you love me?

JANOS. Yes, I love you.

MIMA. Then lie down . . . happy dreams. I'll cover you.

[*He takes out his revolver and rising, points it at ALFONS.*]

JANOS. I know you're hiding there behind the bed, Alfons. Come out, you rat. Throw your knife and your pistol here—here at my feet, or I'll send a bullet into you. Come out.

[The czardas is heard faintly. It is as though a murder is about to be committed to a gay tune.]

ALFONS. Don't shoot me. . . .

[*Throwing out the knife and the revolver.*] There.

JANOS [*to MIMA*]. Stand where you are, my dear, my only love. . . . Don't move. [*To ALFONS.*] Come out. [*ALFONS comes from behind the bed.*] I heard you both planning. [*To MIMA.*] Harlot. [*To ALFONS.*] and thief! Alfons, I shan't punish you. You're a man. Your destiny and my own are alike. [*Throwing the money in the tablecloth on the floor.*] For this money and for your life, leave me the woman and go free.

MIMA. Let him go free? Do you call that justice?

JANOS. You are the one to die. I have lived my life out—I, Janos Janosi. Now I am going to kill my soul and your beautiful body.

[*The deadly sin signal sounds.*]

MAGISTER [*to SATAN, with pride*]. The first genuinely infernal thought, Majesty.

[*The clock now records ten minutes of the hour.*]

ADJUTANT. Bravo!

THE MEMBERS OF THE COURT.
Bravo! Bravo!

MAGISTER [*to the workers*]. Go on.

JANOS [*to ALFONS*]. Take the money and get out. Save your hide.

MIMA. I'm afraid. . . . Alfons, are you leaving me?

ALFONS. Of course.

[*He picks up the cloth with the money in it.*]

MIMA. Are you going to let him kill me?

ALFONS [*stuffing the cloth under his coat*]. Got to think of myself.

JANOS. Get out. [*ALFONS hastens out. The music ends.*] A moment ago, you were explaining how to kill some one you love. . . . That's what

LIB.
I'm going to do—kill you. I love you, and God—[*The devils wince.*]—have mercy on you!

MIMA. No, no, Janos. No, please . . . I didn't want to kill you . . . just now. It was Alfons. That man makes me do anything he— [*She thinks he is about to shoot her.*] Oh, don't! Forgive me, won't you, please?

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Oh, if you'd let me kiss you once more. . . . One more night with me . . . one more night.

JANOS. Never.

MIMA. Please, oh, please—

JANOS. No.

[*He comes down in front of the machine. MIMA follows him step by step. The lights inside the attic dim and fade. The rays are concentrated on MIMA and JANOS in the foreground.*]

MIMA. Oh, I'm afraid. . . . Have me shut up in a prison until the end of my life, but have mercy on me.

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Oh, don't, don't kill me. Oh, let me live.

JANOS [*shouting at her*]. No.

MIMA [*helplessly*]. Must I die? Oh, must I die? Please let me live.

JANOS. No.

MIMA [*writhes on the floor, screaming*]. Oh, oh, I can't die. . . . I don't know how to die. . . . Oh, have pity on me. . . . I'm a worm under your feet. . . . I'm crawling. . . . [*Crawls to him.*] I'm your dog. . . . I'm a—I'm a rag. Have mercy on me.

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Oh! Won't some one help me—[*Cries out.*]—some one help me! Help me! I don't want to die. I want to live and be happy—

JANOS. Stand up.

MIMA [*her strength giving out*]. Oh, this is the terrible, the tragic end of Mima. . . . Don't kill me, please don't. [*The gay tinkling czardas is heard again but dies away as he raises the pistol. She screams.*] Janos!

JANOS. Cry away—scream! I love to torment you, you slinking little animal.

MIMA. Have mercy on me.

JANOS [*violently*]. No. No.

MAGISTER [*delighted*]. Bravo!

[*The devils in the pit acquiesce.*]

MIMA. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! He doesn't even remember that we've slept in each other's arms . . . and all the nights of love we've had. [*Cries.*] I've been so tired, sometimes nearly dead, and I haven't said anything because you wanted me, yes, and you went to sleep satisfied—like a man. You can't kill me. And when we were poor and the money was all gone, I *did* stay a little while. I stayed till your boots had holes in them and looked so pitiful that I cried. One night I washed off your dirty boots with my hot tears and I asked you next morning: "How did your dusty boots get so clean?" and you didn't know . . . remember? . . . Now take me in your arms again and you'll have to forgive me. . . .

JANOS. No.

MAGISTER [*overjoyed*]. Good for you!

[*JANOS raises his pistol. The czardas is heard and dies out.*]

MIMA [*rising in desperation. Her final plea*]. One minute . . . just one minute more—I want to show you something—then you'll have mercy.

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Wait. . . . [*Trying to find something in her stocking.*] I'll find it . . . a minute. . . . Here it is—a letter from your mother— Wait! [*A burst of gay tinkling music is heard. It dies out almost immediately. She catches JANOS' wrist with one hand (he still holds the pistol) and in the other hand she has the letter.*] I'm not lying now. I'm any man's girl: a thief, street-walker and worse than that— I've never been faithful to you—but she forgave me.

JANOS [*sneeringly*]. Ah!

MIMA. She did—she did. I don't have to prove this because it's the truth and here's the letter with her violet in it.

[*She shows the violet.*]

JANOS. Liar! That's her letter to Ilonka, my wife. You stole it.

MIMA. Well, suppose I did— [*Wiping off a tear.*—it means me, too. [*Reads.*] "My dear child," [*Sniffs.*] "don't cry any more. I love you because my dear boy loves you." It means me. [*Sniffs—reads.*] "No matter what you said or did, I would forgive you. Life is too short not to forgive. His mother." Look . . . she forgave me—she forgave every one in the world. If that saint forgave a thing like *me*, can't you, oh, can't you have mercy now?

JANOS [*after a short hesitation*]. Yes.

MIMA. Oh, how good you are.

[*She collapses at his feet—a drooping manikin.*]

MAGISTER [*calls sharply*]. Halt! Stop the machine. [*There is a sudden silence. JANOS stands immovable. MIMA lies on the floor.*] There's something wrong here. He said "Yes" when he should have answered "No."

[He throws the light on the clock. It still lacks ten minutes of the hour.]

MALACODA. The machine is running perfectly, sir.

MAGISTER *[exasperated]*. It can't be. He shouldn't have forgiven her. I can't see how it happened. Investigate the main switch.

LIBICOCCO. In order, sir.

MAGISTER. The carburetor, then.

LIBICOCCO. On stop 15.

MAGISTER. Spark gap?

CALCABRINA. At the maximum.

MAGISTER *[more exasperated]*. But I don't understand why he has forgiven her. Scarmiglione, connect the extra dynamo. . . . Done?

SCARMIGLIONE. Done.

MAGISTER. Switch the time wheels back one minute. Now then, the last part once more. Attention. Go.

[SCARMIGLIONE starts the machine. MAGISTER looks down on JANOS and MIMA. The devils in the orchestra pit watch the following scene without moving.]

MIMA *[picking up the things she has let fall out of her stocking and putting them back again, resumes the dialogue in the position she assumed when she said these words. JANOS again stands looking at her, in anger]*. . . . I washed off your dirty boots with my hot tears and I asked you next morning: "How did your dirty boots get so clean?" And you didn't know . . . remember? Now take me in your arms again and you'll have to forgive me. . . .

JANOS. No.

[He comes closer—raises his pistol. The czardas is heard again and dies out.]

MIMA *[rising—desperate—her final*

plea]. One minute . . . just one minute more— I want to show you something—then you'll have mercy.

JANOS. No.

MIMA. Wait. *[Trying to find something in her stocking.]* I'll find it . . . a minute. . . . Here it is—a letter from your mother— Wait! *[A burst of gay tinkling music is heard. It dies out almost immediately. She catches JANOS' wrist with one hand (he still holds the pistol) and in the other hand she has the letter.]* I'm not lying now. I'm any man's girl: a thief, street-walker and worse than that— I've never been faithful to you, but she forgave me.

JANOS *[sneeringly]*. Ah!

MIMA. She did—she did. I don't have to prove this because it's the truth and here's her letter with the violet in it.

[She shows the violet.]

JANOS. Liar! That's her letter to Ilonka, my wife. You stole it.

MIMA. Well, suppose I did— *[Wiping off a tear.]*—it means me, too. *[Reads.]* "My dear child," *[Sniffs.]* "don't cry any more. I love you because my dear boy loves you." It means me. *[Sniffs—reads.]* "No matter what you said or did, I would forgive you. Life is too short not to forgive. His mother." Look . . . she forgave me—she forgave every one in the world. If that saint forgave a thing like me, can't you, oh, can't you have mercy now?

JANOS *[after a short hesitation, even more emphatically than before]*. Yes.

MIMA. Oh, how good you are.

[She collapses at his feet—a drooping manikin.]

MAGISTER. Halt! Stop the machine. *[The clock still records ten minutes of the hour.]* The same

trouble for the second time. . . .
[Great excitement and anxiety on the machine. SCARMIGLIONE stops the engine.] Majesty: he should have answered: "No, I'll show you no mercy!" and fired. But instead of that—he suddenly grows soft and forgives her. *[Commanding.]* Attention. . . . Every one in his place. I'll look at the spark gap myself. Perhaps the trouble is there.

[He investigates. JANOS and MIMA are motionless. The devils in the pit are watching intently.]

RUBICANTE *[who has been looking into the machine, now shouts]*. I beg to report—

MAGISTER *[impatiently]*. Well, what is it?

RUBICANTE. Some mysterious vibration has taken hold of the machine.

[A vague rumbling is heard and the doors of the attic close in the darkness.]

MAGISTER *[seeing his assistants standing about helplessly]*. Don't be discouraged. It's nothing serious.

VARIOUS VOICES. No, sir, no, sir.

MAGISTER. Malacoda, lift up the reflector plates. Let me hear the fire. Our trouble's down there. *[The scene darkens as MAGISTER presses a button and the reflection of the flames gives out a fierce glow, accompanied by a licking sound of flames. The glow is so intense that all on the stage are bathed in it.]* No, the trouble's not there. *[The plates are put down.]* It's the pressure. When I give the signal, more pressure on that fellow. *[Pointing to JANOS.]* That's it!

SCARMIGLIONE. We're running at top speed now, sir.

MALACODA. Something's wrong, the machine's trembling . . . the human tears are boiling over.

MAGISTER. Put on more pressure.

CALCABRINA. Yes, master.

MAGISTER. Now let's try it again: set back thirty seconds this time—all switches a full turn—start slowly. . . . Once more—go.

[Various workmen obey.]

MIMA *[comes to life slowly, out of her motionless state and begins as before]*. . . . Life is too short not to forgive. His mother." Look . . . she forgave me—she forgave every one in the world. If that saint forgave a thing like me, can't you, oh, can't you have mercy now?

JANOS *[crying out]*. Yes.

MIMA. Oh, how good you are.

[Crumples at his feet as before.]

MAGISTER *[shouting]*. Halt! Stop the engine.

JANOS *[becoming conscious of MAGISTER's voice]*. You cannot change it. Yes, yes and a hundred times yes, I'll forgive her! Yes, yes, yes. That's why we're born into this world, to forgive, to be human, to have mercy. *[To MIMA.]* Come, don't cry. *[Lifts MIMA tenderly. She sobs in his arms.]* Poor, miserable, pitiful child . . . poor thing. Now I can breathe . . . that terrible heat is lifted from my brain.

MAGISTER *[roaring]*. Halt! Scarmiglione, stop the machine.

SCARMIGLIONE *[shouting back]*. I can't! I can't control it now, master.

[At this point the liquids in the tubes are rising dangerously near the top. None of the workers are doing anything—they are helpless. Some of the little imps fly up, hover over

the mill and disappear—others stay.]

MAGISTER. Throw on the emergency belt. Forward.

MIMA. Oh, keep your arms about me and tell me again that I'm a poor thing. . . . [*Sobbing in a childlike manner as he holds her close to him.*]

Oh, why am I so evil?

JANOS. You're not evil.

MIMA. I am! I am!

JANOS. No one is evil. I forgive you because of my love for my mother—her little withered flower and her tender thought of me. . . . Yes, and every man and every woman will always rise to the thought of love—always—in spite of all the devils in Hell. No one is evil.

[The devils turn malignant glances on him, and hiss.

MIMA, crying, kisses his hand, clinging to him.]

MAGISTER [*commanding, like the captain of a ship in a storm*]. Take care, Draghignazzo, don't let him get out of the ray. Connect the spark.

JANOS [*defying him, getting away from the light—MIMA following him*]. Now, you can connect it as much as you like.

[He faces MAGISTER for the first time, hatred in his eyes.]

DRAUGHIGNAZZO [*trying his switches without result*]. Impossible, master. Ever since he said he loved his mother, I cannot connect the current.

JANOS. And you never will. [*Drawing MIMA closer.*] I forgive her.

[A sound of ripping steel is heard.]

MALACODA. Master, the chains are tearing as though they were paper.

MAGISTER. Forward, Malacoda,

with the greatest heat at our command.

JANOS. Useless; I forgive her.

[The machine rumbles.]

RUBICANTE. The wheels are turning backwards, master.

MALACODA. The great belt is running backwards.

MAGISTER. Use every brake.

[RUBICANTE runs back and disappears in the labyrinth of machinery.]

MALACODA. Some spell has conquered the machine, Magister.

MAGISTER [*with fierce anger*]. Use every brake.

JANOS. Raise your eyes, Mima. Don't cry. Life is bitter, but love is sweet. Look up. . . . Mima, how changed you are!

MIMA. My heart is not burning now.

[Her hand is on her bad heart.]

JANOS. Your eyes are . . . are pure.

MIMA [*clinging to him*]. I love you.

MAGISTER [*calling frantically*]. Rubicante? Rubicante—report.

RUBICANTE [*appearing, greatly agitated*]. Master . . . master. . . . There's something that looks like a sharp grain of sand in the machine . . . it shines like a diamond running through the tubes scratching and tearing everything. I saw it first when he said "yes." The human blood boiled over in the tanks—and then it grew and grew— Look! Now it's red!

MAGISTER [*realizing the cause of the disaster*]. Ah! that's it! It's that particle of sand—that rotten speck of sand, diamond or whatever it may be, that shines deep down in every

man, that I could not grind, melt or destroy.

[*A bell starts tolling in the machine. JANOS is still facing MAGISTER, defiantly. MIMA releases herself from JANOS and sits at his feet, looking up at him adoringly, her back to the audience. She is a pitiful little figure amidst all the devils.*]

MIMA. Bells . . . sweet tolling bells.

ADJUTANT. Stop the church bells.

THE DEVILS IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT. Stop them!

MALACODA. I cannot.

ADJUTANT. Stop them!

[*Incessant rumbling from now on. The bells peal out strong and vibrant.*]

THE DEVILS IN THE ORCHESTRA PIT. Stop them! Stop them!

RUBICANTE. Master, the machine's done for.

MIMA [to JANOS]. Sweet chiming bells. . . .

[*There is a continual low rumbling of the machinery, but the bells never cease.*]

MAGISTER. The work of half a million years is crumbling. One word caused the ruin of this gigantic creation of infernal genius. It's a drop of the blood of God I'm fighting and I've failed because of his banalities . . . [*He is now face to face with JANOS.*] . . . his love for his mother and that stinking withered little flower! [*Shakes his fist at JANOS.*] Damn you! Curse you! I could not beat the human animal. There is something within him, way down deep, some tiny drop that cannot be corrupted. A man may be so rotten that we shriek with joy, still there shines brightly within him that

grain of good. . . . [*Utterly crushed.*] Oh! Oh! After all these centuries I have failed. . . . I have failed.

[*He falls to the ground and writhes like a caterpillar.*]

JANOS [*exalted*]. You have failed because I descend from God. [*From the distance one single rejoicing blast of a trumpet is heard. The devils cringe and hiss.*] Prostrate yourself before that shining grain of sand which He has given me to carry me through the journey.

[*The devils hiss again.*]

MIMA [*exalted, on her knees, looking up*]. God!

RUBICANTE [*rushing forward*]. Master, the manikins are free. . . . They've broken loose.

DRAGHIGNAZZO [*from the bridge*]. I can't control the rays.

[*A cylinder of the machine opens and the manikins rush out and fall on their knees before JANOS.*]

ALFONS. Janos, Janos. I didn't want to murder you—I wanted to be your friend; I couldn't because he [*Meaning MAGISTER.*] made me with no heart. [*In deepest sorrow.*] Oh, dear. I've no heart. Oh, where can I get a heart?

[*Looks wildly about for a heart.*]

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS [*pointing to MIMA*]. I didn't want to possess that woman's body, Janos. But there was something that drove me on and on.

CROUPIER. I didn't wish to force you to gamble, sir, he [*Indicating MAGISTER.*] made me.

GAMBLERS [*their cards still in their hands as they kneel*]. We didn't want to gamble.

MIMA'S HUSBAND [*indicating MIMA*]. She was my wife. I wanted

to forgive her, but something wouldn't let me—I couldn't.

STREET-WALKER. I was forced to walk the streets. It wasn't my wish.

ALFONS. Oh, where can I find a heart?

MAID. I was compelled to lie, sir. I couldn't help it.

THE MANIKINS [*pointing at MAGISTER*]. He did it all—that man! He! He! He!

MIMA [*to the manikins*]. Don't be frightened. [*Pointing to JANOS*]. He will save you—he will save you. Cling to him.

MANIKINS. Save us! Save us!

MAGISTER [*in a terrible rage*]. Get those manikins out of here quickly, Rubicante.

[*Devils come out from the shadows and try to seize the MANIKINS. RUBICANTE leaps at them, swinging and crackling his whip, the sparks flying, but he cannot control them. The MANIKINS are defiant as they run off in various directions.*]

ADJUTANT [*rising*]. Order that man Janos up above. Drag him up. Get rid of him.

MAGISTER. Drag him up.

JANOS [*as a devil approaches him*]. Take your hands off me, you dog-greasy devil! Man descends with others, but he must rise by himself.

[*At this moment, the organ is heard in a triumphant burst of music.*]

ADJUTANT. Stop that church organ.

MALACODA. I can't, sir. It's sounding of its own accord.

[*The devils writhe and cower. Above the music rumbling, buzzing, and crackling of flames can be heard inside the*

machine. The red glow of the fire increases. The workers on the machine are panic-stricken, but dare not leave their posts until at last the machine bursts into flames.]

RUBICANTE. The machine's on fire.

. . . Master, the machine's on fire.

[*SATAN and his followers rise in alarm. A glow comes from the chimneys. The clock disappears. The machine begins to smoke. Flames dart out of the chimneys. Red—red—everywhere a red glow is seen. The imps left on the machine shriek and fly away. One of them drops JANOS' hat. The devils on the machine have deserted their posts, rushing down and huddling behind RUBICANTE, dazed, beaten.*]

MAGISTER. My mill. . . . My mill is burning. . . . All my work in vain!

ADJUTANT. Come away, Your Majesty.

MEMBERS OF THE COURT. Come away. Let us run. This way. Quickly. Come, Your Majesty.

ADJUTANT. Your Majesty, this way.

[*SATAN and his followers escape. Suddenly there is a terrific explosion and with a crash The Red Mill collapses as though blown apart, the stairway swings round, the other parts cave in. The workers disappear, all save MAGISTER who throws himself down in despair.*]

JANOS is still standing, MIMA sitting at his feet. The noises cease. The glow of the fire goes down. The organ that

has played through the destruction of The Red Mill has stopped, and now begins a low soft air: "The Glistening Fields of Rye."

JANOS [*as though his memory was returning*]. Why . . . that's the— the hymn I sang in the garden when they came and took me. . . . I—I'm going home. [*He sees his hat where the imp threw it and puts it on.*] My good little Ilonka, darling wife, I'm coming back to you. I'm coming, Ilonka. [*He starts to go—turns—sees MIMA, who, sitting on the floor, looking at him, has never even noticed the burning of the mill. He suddenly realizes that she is alone—helpless.*] Oh . . . Mima . . . I had forgotten all about you. [*He goes to her and, reaching down, brings her to her feet. Perplexed, not knowing what to do with her.*] Mima . . . my poor child, I must leave you. I'm going back to my home and . . .

MIMA. Where is that? Is it far away?

JANOS. Yes, it's very far away. I'm sorry to leave you here, but—

MIMA. When shall I see you again?

JANOS. Never again.

MIMA. Oh, no. . . . Oh, no, don't go away. . . . Stay here and tell me I'm a poor thing—please do.

JANOS. I'm sorry, but I must go.

MIMA. What will become of me?

JANOS. I don't know. . . . But it's late and at home—[*He takes out his watch.*]*—they'll be waiting. [Remembering, staring at his watch.]* Why . . . I've only been away from home an hour.

MIMA. An hour? Oh, no. I've been with you a whole lifetime.

JANOS. I'm confused, myself—but that isn't true.

MIMA. Yes, it is. Years and years I've lived with you and I married you and quarreled with you—and ruined you—and at last—just a moment ago when I found my heart—I loved you. . . . [*Her voice breaks.*] I do love you. . . . Don't leave me, Janos. We can't separate now. [*Out of the twisted, blackened wreck of the machine, the staircase remains and seems to point out the way to JANOS. This way JANOS takes.*] Don't leave me. I love you very dearly.

JANOS. I must go. [*Now on the stairs.*] Good-bye, Mima. Forgive me, my poor Mima. Good-bye.

MIMA. Oh, don't leave me. Janos . . . Janos . . . [*But he has gone off, as though on his way up to the earth. MIMA has followed him up the staircase, calling:*] Janos . . . Janos . . . Come back. . . . I love you, dear. . . . Come back . . . I love you . . . Janos . . . Janos . . . [*Giving a last despairing call.*] Janos. . . . Oh, where are you? Janos—come back . . . Janos. . . .

[*We hear his voice faintly, far off.*]

JANOS. Good-bye.

MIMA. Oh!

[*She stands on the top of the crooked, twisted staircase. The hymn ends in a soft finale of trumpets, as though she had found her soul. The trumpets are heard far off. As they die out, her hands fall to her sides helplessly. Then the organ plays a flight of notes like a series of footsteps, as though staying with her to the end to guide her to the foot of the*

blackened staircase. There she halts—overcome—dazed.]

MAGISTER [*who has risen*]. Mima.

MIMA [*in tears*]. O mortal man! What did he do to my two hearts? How they ache. . . . Janos. . . .

[*Calling JANOS, she collapses in the arms of MAGISTER, like a toy broken to pieces, and ceases to breathe.*]

MAGISTER. Mima. . . . [*He lifts one of MIMA's hands—it drops. He sobs.*] Mima. . . . My wonderful manikin—broken . . . gone. . . .

[*Darkness. When the red curtains part, we see*

[THE LAST SCENE: *The edge of the forest. The scene is the same as in the First Part. It is now evening. The moon is shining. The village chimes are heard in a distance. They convey the effect of being in The Red Mill.*

JANOS *is again on the bench.*]

ILONKA'S VOICE. Janos! Janos! [*He does not answer. She enters—looks at JANOS whose eyes are closed.*] Dearest, are you asleep?

JANOS [*full of his separation from MIMA, he stares at ILONKA*]. No. No, I haven't been asleep, Ilonka. . . . How did I get out of that infernal place? Where's my hat?

[*Looks about, sees his hat.*]

ILONKA. What place?

JANOS [*with horror*]. Those awful bells. . . .

ILONKA. Why, dear, you always loved the church chimes. . . . Your cabbage is done, Janos.

JANOS. Eh? . . . Oh, yes, cabbage. . . .

ILONKA. I said I'd call you . . . don't you remember?

JANOS [*vaguely*]. Oh, yes. [*With agony in his eyes.*] Where's the baby?

ILONKA. Baby? Why we haven't got a baby. You *must* have been dreaming. [*Laughingly.*] Happy are they who can dream, they say.

JANOS. I'm not so sure.

ILONKA. Come in to supper, dear, and eat your nice creamed cabbage.

[*She goes into the house. He rises—pauses—looks down—calls softly.*]

JANOS. Mima. . . . Mima. . . .

A VOICE. Janos. . . . [*For a moment he thinks it is MIMA's voice. The VOICE calls again.*] Janos. . . .

JANOS [*realizing that it is ILONKA who has called*]. Yes, yes, I'm coming.

[*He goes in to supper, but as he reaches the door, he looks back, still thinking of MIMA.*]

CURTAIN

THE GLASS SLIPPER

Acting version by
PHILLIP MOELLER

First produced in America by
The Theatre Guild
October 9, 1925

CHARACTERS

SIPOS
ADELE
IRMA
MRS. ROTICS
PAL CSASZAR
MAGISTRATE
POLICE SERGEANT
VIOLA
JANITOR
JANITRESS
ADELE'S MOTHER
ILONA KECZELI
BANDA SZASZ

MR. STETNER
POLICE DOCTOR
POLICE CLERK
PROSECUTOR
COMPANION
COOK
PHOTOGRAPHER
PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT
LEADER OF GYPSIES
JULCSA
POLICEMAN
SERGEANT-AT-ARMS
LILLY

WEDDING GUESTS

Action takes place in one of the outlying districts of Budapest, the Joseph District.

ACT ONE

[SCENE: Little furnished room on the outskirts of the Joseph District, in a little one-story house. In a back alcove, a simple bed. On the back wall, flower-decorated window, opening into the courtyard, where there is a garden. Next to the window, on the left side wall, a door which also opens to the same courtyard. Washstand. Wardrobe. Table. Chairs. Left front, a door. It is now

noon. A Sunday in summer. At the rise of the curtain there is no one in the room. The bells are tolling noon. IRMA enters rear; she is a nineteen-year-old poor little servant girl, in this poor house. She is carrying a child of about three or four years; apparently she is hardly able to carry him.]

IRMA [counting the strokes of the bell]. Nine, ten, eleven, twelve.

[*Puts the child on bed.*] Now sit down here nicely, Lilly, be very quiet, because Irma is going to set the table for that darling big man. This good-for-nothing Irma is going to set it for that sweet, darling, angry man. It's just twelve o'clock. [*Opens a drawer—setting the table.*] Now Lilly, try to learn how to set a table. First, the cloth's got to be smoothed out nicely. Here is where that darling, angry one rests his elbow on it. You see? There are four spots on it. Two spinach, two tomato. The napkin we put at the right hand. That's what he wipes his mouth in, that darling angry one. [*Kisses the napkin.*] Lilly, sending him a kiss with the napkin post. This is a happy napkin, and I am the brokenest blossom in all Budapest. [*Crosses to bed.*] Understand, Lilly? I made up a poem for him. "Faded flower of the Spring, beaten blossom in the rain—all the leaves are whispering, that my heart is full of pain." Isn't it a beautiful poem? That's by me. But you've heard that often, haven't you, Lilly? [*Crosses to cupboard for plate, knife and fork.*] The plate has to be put exactly in the center. Fork to the left, knife to the right, spoon across in front. [*Placing tumbler.*] Glass here, right at his hand. He drinks from this, angel of my happiness, darling angry one. Here's where he drinks from it. [*Kisses tumbler.*] Sending him a kiss with the glass post. [*Orating.*] "All the leaves are whispering—that my heart is full of pain." Wine and soda water come only later. Right after the soup, otherwise it gets warm, do you understand, silly? You are the most stupid little grasshopper in the neighborhood. [*Crosses to bed.*] I

don't mean you, Lilly. I mean me. He sits here. My dear, angry master, the dearest angry one in all Budapest. [*Crosses to cupboard.*] Salt, paprika, toothpicks. Stab my unhappy heart, oh, happy toothpick. [*Orating.*] "Faded flower of the Spring, beaten blossom in the rain—All the leaves are whispering, that my heart is full of pain." There is a pebble in my shoe— [*Draws it off.*] You see, I am the brokenest blossom in all Budapest—but, nevertheless, just look at my ankle, and my foot is prettier than the Countess Guttman's. Isn't it, Lilly? [*Crosses to bed.*] There were two pebbles— [*Sits on chair at left of table.*] I have a pretty foot, but no one wants my poor little foot, so sad and slim. Where wouldn't you go to follow him—

[*Orating.*]

ADELE [*off stage*]. Irma! Irma! [*As IRMA is drawing on the shoe, ADELE enters from the courtyard. ADELE from door.*] What are you doing here?

IRMA. Setting the table for Mr. Sipos.

ADELE [*above table*]. With your foot?

IRMA. A pebble got into my shoe.

ADELE. Who were you talking to?

IRMA. Nobody. I was talking with Lilly, in my great unhappiness.

ADELE. Are you going crazy again?

IRMA. I am always going crazy, begging your pardon.

[*Tries to kiss her hand.*]

ADELE. Never mind, put on your shoe, and do your work quietly. [*Opens the door, calls out to courtyard.*] Kati! Got the table set?

Kati, why don't you keep your kid at home?

[*The JANITRESS appears in the doorway.*]

KATI. What can I do, if she wants to drag him around all the time—

ADELE. Kati, come here— [KATI enters, picks up the child.] What are you dragging it around for?

[*Crosses center below table.*]

IRMA. I adore Lilly.

KATI [*above table*]. Please, ma'am, tell her—not to be calling the child Lilly all the time, because he has an honest name of his own—haven't you, Johnny—

LILLY. Yes, mama.

KATI. Do you hear that—and if she keeps on calling him Lilly, he's likely to think he's a Lilly.

ADELE. What sort of foolishness is this? The child isn't a girl.

IRMA. I consider him a girl, because he has such a sweet, girlish little face. [*To the child.*] My little girl friend, aren't you, Lilly?

KATI. Always dragging him around, sooner or later, he'll forget he's a boy, and God knows it was hard enough to learn— She thinks she can do anything she wants, ma'am, just because she is a distant relative of yours.

ADELE. In the distance she is a relative, but right here she is a servant, and don't you be afraid to call her down.

KATI. All right, ma'am.

ADELE [*crosses to IRMA at bed*]. There is no doubt about it, you're cracked. Do you know it? But I'm going to throw you out of this house, and send you back to my mother, to live among the cows. You're never going to make a decent servant girl—

KATI. That's right—

ADELE. What's the matter with you?

IRMA. Nothing.

ADELE. What did you do all morning?

IRMA. Nothing.

ADELE. Kati tells me that you kept walking around naked in the courtyard at six o'clock this morning.

IRMA. It's not true.

KATI. It is true, I saw it with my own eyes.

IRMA. It's not true, because I didn't keep walking around.

ADELE. But you were naked.

IRMA. Why shouldn't I be naked? I was taking a bath.

KATI. Ah, you see!

ADELE. What were you bathing in?

IRMA. In the rain barrel. I was bathing back in the courtyard, where no one saw me; every one was asleep in the house. I took a bath and got dressed right away.

ADELE. All right, Kati, you may go now. [KATI goes out with the child.] How dare you take a bath in the rain barrel? [*Crosses front of table.*] What did you take a bath for?

KATI [*off*]. Shut up, Johann.

IRMA [*standing at bed*]. Because I was dirty.

ADELE. That is your latest craze, this bathing. The other day you took a bath in the washtub.

IRMA. But that made me miserable, all right, because there was too much blueing in it, and for two days I was blue, like a sweet fairy when the moon shines on her.

ADELE. I'll fairy you all right. I'll hit you till you see stars. Why are you fixing yourself up?

IRMA. I don't fix myself up. I am just ugly.

ADELE. You're ugly all right, but just the same you are always primping yourself up. Where's the wine and the soda water for Mr. Sipos?

IRMA. It's on the ice. I don't want to bring it in because then it gets warm, and then he yells like hell.

ADELE. What sort of talk is that? How dare you talk this way of Mr. Sipos?

IRMA. Well, he calls me down pretty often, anyway.

ADELE. He's right.

IRMA. Well, sure he's right.

ADELE. Don't give me any back talk. Shut up.

IRMA. Yes, ma'am, I'm shutting up.

ADELE. Well, shut up— [*Crosses up center to door.*] Put on your shoe, what are you standing there with bare feet for?

[*IRMA puts on her shoe.*]

ADELE. This afternoon you'll stay home and do your ironing, do you understand? You'll look through all the stockings, and you'll darn those that need mending. Iron the whole bunch of them. And when you're through with that, you'll carry down the wash from the attic, and get it ready. That's going to be your Sunday. And you won't be allowed to go to the theatre for a whole week. I'll show you! Did you go to the watchmaker's?

IRMA [*crosses up to below door*]. The watch isn't ready yet.

ADELE. That's not what I asked you. I said did you go to the watchmaker's?

IRMA. Yes'm, I did.

ADELE. What did he say?

IRMA. That the watch isn't ready yet.

ADELE. Well! That's the way to answer when I ask you something. When Mr. Sipos comes in, tell him that you were there, but that the watch isn't ready yet. For eight years I've tried and I can't make you answer properly. This way you'll never make a good servant. I'm going to send you out to the country, to the stable, to milk cows. That's where you belong.

IRMA. I don't belong there, begging your pardon.

[*Tries to kiss her hand.*]

ADELE. Leave my hand alone! What I need is a real servant in this boarding house. Cleaning up after four boarders, setting the table, washing—that means real work. But you'll never settle down because you're crazy. I've been teaching you since your tenth year, because your poor mother was my cousin—a distant cousin, but nevertheless a cousin. I promised her that I'd take care of your bringing-up. I thought that one of these days you'd make yourself useful, but it's all no use, the trouble is in your head. Its back is in front, its front is in back.

IRMA. Its front isn't in back, and please don't say such things to me. I'm not crazy, I just got a weak mind. But I'll try to change. Just now I'm still unhappy.

ADELE. Is that why you tried to suckle the kitten last night?

IRMA. What did I try to do with the kitten?

ADELE. You gave your breast to the kitten. You tried to suckle a four-day-old little cat, because you're as stupid as an ox and haven't got any manners. Mr. Szasz saw you;

THE GLASS SLIPPER ♦

he told me. Ain't you ashamed of yourself nursing cats in front of the boarders?

IRMA. There was only one.

ADELE. You fool. Where is the bread? Why is there no bread on the table?

IRMA. Mother of Jesus!

[*Rushes out for the bread, puts it on the table.*]

ADELE. You haven't any brains for bread but you've brains enough for baths and brains enough for kittens, brains enough for ribbons—

IRMA. I don't have brains for ribbons.

[*Crosses to left near bed.*]

ADELE. Shut up. I found a whole pack of ribbons in your closet. Where did you get them? [IRMA weeps.] Quit bawling! Where did you get the ribbons?

IRMA. At Suchar and Eisner's.

ADELE. Where did you get the money?

[IRMA weeps.]

IRMA. Mr. Csaszar gave it to me.

ADELE [*crosses to IRMA at left*]. You dared to take money from Mr. Csaszar? You're a fine one!

IRMA. No, I'm not, and please don't say such things to me. God help me, I'm not a fine one, I just went on an errand for Mr. Csaszar, and he gave me an extra tip for that, and the half of it I put aside for a gallery seat to the theatre, and out of the other half I bought three ribbons at Suchar and Eisner's, please to ask them, if you don't please to believe me.

ADELE [*crosses to left*]. If you ever dare to accept money from Mr. Csaszar, you'll see what I'll do to you! The nerve of it! [IRMA weeps.]

CSASZAR *enters from courtyard.* What do you want?

[*Crosses to left of table.*]

CSASZAR [*near table*]. Nothing.

ADELE. Then get out. This is Sipos' room.

CSASZAR. Well, I just heard that you were quarreling in here, so I came in, because I heard my name and I thought, she is pretty angry, maybe she'll take it out on me instead—

ADELE. None of your jokes, please. I'm in no humor for witticisms. The reason you and the others dare to talk this way to me is because I'm not a married woman. But don't you worry, now that I'm getting married, I'm going to get more respect from you, too.

CSASZAR. You're going to be married? When?

ADELE. To-day.

CSASZAR. What!

ADELE. Yes, to-day, if it interests you so much. I'll be a married woman.

CSASZAR. You're going to get married to-day?

ADELE. Yes, but I don't want to until next week.

CSASZAR. What is this? Are you joking?

ADELE [*crosses to left to IRMA*]. Get out of here. Get out of here!

IRMA. I've still got to fix the wash bowl and the slippers.

ADELE [*crosses center*]. Don't argue with me, get out, if I tell you. You'll do that later. Don't know what to do with her any more. That's making me nervous, too—that slut, to-day she was bathing naked in the rain barrel, and I found a carload of ribbons in her closet, and it was you who gave her the money

for it— What are you up to with her—aren't you ashamed of yourself, trying to—and with a servant girl only nineteen and dirty at that. Aren't you ashamed of yourself, you pimp? Can't you find any better women in the neighborhood?

CSASZAR [*crosses to right*]. Very nervous, very nervous.

ADELE. Did you give her the money?

CSASZAR. Sure I did, because I sent her to Huttledrof on an errand.

CSASZAR [*crosses left to IRMA. To IRMA*]. But you, if you keep shooting your mouth off, I'll give you a crack in the jaw, if you go on trying to make people think that. . . .

IRMA. I wasn't trying to make nobody think nothing, I swear by my happiness, and I don't want Mr. Csaszar neither this way nor that.

CSASZAR [*crosses back center*]. I don't want to be wanted by you, but don't you start any talk about me.

[ADELE and CSASZAR cross up stage center.]

IRMA [*crosses below table*]. I don't start any talk. I work like a dog, but everybody is against me, and Mr. Szasz snitched on me that I tried to nurse the cat, because he hates me, for he wanted to mouth with me and I wouldn't let him.

ADELE [*crosses down center*]. He wanted to what—?

IRMA. He tried to mouth a cherry with me—that he'll put the cherry in his mouth and that I should bite off half and he should bite off half and then when we got to the pit we'd have to kiss— He was teasing me for a half hour, saying that I should at least put the cherry in my mouth, but I hate him—even though he promised me a theatre ticket, even

then I wouldn't do it, and now he hates me and tries to turn madam against me—begging your pardon—I don't know what to do any more. I'm going to stick my head in the rain barrel and keep it in there till I choke! That's what I'm going to do. I can't stand it. Why don't you all—leave me alone!

ADELE [*crosses to right. To IRMA*]. Get out! Of all the. . . Back to your work!

[IRMA goes out, weeping.]

CSASZAR [*crosses to table, sits on it*]. Say, what the hell is the matter with you any way, all the time grumbling and on Sunday, too. You're driving the cook crazy. You're killing this kid; as long as you're getting married, what's biting you?

ADELE [*crosses to right*]. That's just what it is—

CSASZAR. Who are you marrying?

ADELE. Sipos.

CSASZAR. Say, are you crazy?

ADELE. I am.

[Pause.]

CSASZAR [*crosses to ADELE*]. Please sit down. It's awful how nervous you are. Maybe you really are crazy after all, I don't know. Tell me. What is this? And this business about the ribbons. . . . And that I'm flirting with the servant girl. . . . [*Passionately embracing her.*] Are you mad? Are you jealous? [*Kisses her.*] You fool . . . you . . . you . . .

ADELE [*draws away*]. Let me alone. Sipos is likely to come home any moment. Now listen to me. Everything is over. What do you want? Everything is over. Can't you understand?

CSASZAR. What is over?

ADELE. That I'm your mistress.

CSASZAR. How. . . . Now all of a

sudden it's ended, without any reason, at exactly a quarter past twelve?

ADELE. At exactly a quarter past twelve. [*Clinch.*] Leave me alone, now and forever.

[*Pushes off CSASZAR.*]

CSASZAR. But only last evening . . . and night . . .

ADELE. But not to-day. And never again. I swear by my mother's life.

CSASZAR. Why? Why?

ADELE. Because I'm in love with you. Detestable, dressed up, conceited drummer, I'm in love with you, terribly in love, and now it's all over because I have brains and strength. I hate you and despise you. But now I'm getting older and I am more in love with you, and now I want to kick you out and marry Sipos, right away, at that, without waiting a day, otherwise I'll go to hell with you. I made a little money in this boarding-house, and I'm thirty-six years old, and you haven't a cent and you're rotten and twenty-three and impertinent and handsome, and want to marry that rich little idiot. And it's all no use, unless I save myself—I know myself. I know what kind of a woman I am—the end is going to be that I'll beg you not to get married, and bite you in the neck and throw vitriol into your face and stick a kitchen knife into you. But still I won't let you get married,—and then here I'll be, an old—what-you-may-call-it, who has a young lover, and then you'll beat me every day and then I'll hang myself. That is all, my dear boy, no more and no less.

CSASZAR. It's awful, your talking this way—

[*Crosses to left at table.*]

ADELE. Does it hurt you?

CSASZAR [*on table, left sits*]. Terribly.

ADELE [*crosses center*]. It hurts me even worse. You'll never know how much it hurts me. And you don't deserve to know. What are you, anyway? A nobody. Have you character? No. Have you money? No. No. Are you honest? I don't even know. You're a handsome boy and you were impertinent, and for ten years I've been the mistress of a cranky old man—and the only thing you've ever done for me was to be fresh— You were fresh to me at Balazsy's, when we first got acquainted, then you got fresh to me at the Nivana Café,—you got fresh twice in succession and that—made me wild and I let you have a room here, and you wouldn't even talk to me, and I bought myself new dresses on account of you,—I'm the most respected woman in the neighborhood, and you wouldn't even take off your hat to me, and I sewed lace on my nightgowns and even bought myself a pair of patent leather slippers, and still you wouldn't notice me and you wouldn't even look at me. You just kept on being fresh, and I bit my hand in my anger, and you laughed in my face,—and then, when you were even more impertinent and made me cry, then you took me into your room. Sipos was at Budaors at my mother's—and I slept with you and then I slept with you again and I was crazy about you—and wept because of you, but that was just anger, and still I was unfaithful to Sipos with you always, always, you nobody, you heartless, empty thing. Just because you were fresh and a beggar and handsome and

now take off your hat to me, is that any reason why I should go to the dogs and die?

[ADELE *crosses to chair right of door at center.*]

CSASZAR [*stands. Crosses center to chair*]. Good God, it's really terrible, this nervousness of yours. What do you want, anyway? Everything is all right, we're all happy, I'm crazy about you, Sipos doesn't suspect a thing, isn't even thinking of marrying you, your boarding is paying well enough— It's true, Sipos doesn't pay and I don't pay, but the others all do. You are healthy, you're pretty, you're young; what do you want? What do you want anyway, why are you throwing everything aside all of a sudden?

ADELE [*pushes him center off, moves down right*]. You want to marry Balaszy's daughter.

CSASZAR [*holds up center*]. That isn't true.

ADELE. Oh, what's that to you! Just another lie. Of course, you say it isn't true. You want to marry Balaszy's daughter.

CSASZAR. Not true, not true.

ADELE. Last Sunday you went on a picnic with her. Is that true, or not?

CSASZAR. True. But I told you in advance that . . .

ADELE. Don't stammer. On Wednesday you went to the movies with the girl; is that true or not?

CSASZAR [*crosses to ADELE*]. Didn't I ask your permission in advance?

ADELE. Did you go to the movies with her? Yes or no?

CSASZAR. Yes.

ADELE. What did you keep on whispering into her ear in the dark? Why did you go with her father to

the Nivana café? Why did you take her ring and her bracelet to be reset?

CSASZAR. Because I'm a jeweler and that's my trade.

ADELE. You're a faker, a marriage hunter; that's your trade!

CSASZAR. But, Adele!

ADELE. This morning for an hour you kept on begging Brausz, the butcher, to loan you his wagon for this afternoon. You told him that you wanted to take your fiancée for an outing.

CSASZAR. I said my fiancée? An acquaintance, I said . . .

ADELE. Don't lie, you told him it was your fiancée. You're a cheat, a cheat, a cheat. You want to marry Balaszy's daughter, because her father's got nothing but coin, you liar!

CSASZAR. Adele, you call me . . . me . . .

ADELE. Liar, liar, liar!!

CSASZAR [*turning front*]. Adele, if I should forget that I am a gentleman. . . .

ADELE. Go on, hit me

CSASZAR [*shrugs, steps back, crosses to right*]. You're crazy! If you go on this way, I'll go away.

ADELE. I could still stop the whole affair. Take it from me, it would take only a word from me. But I know what I'm doing. You can marry the carpenter's daughter. I'm going to marry Sipos. Sipos is a decent, honest man. And once I'm Mrs. Sipos, no other man touches me, ever, I give you my word on that,— you ought to know that if you know me. And then I'll be able to breathe again and I'll be rid of you . . . because from the beginning you have been nothing to me but bad luck.

CSASZAR. You're going to marry

Sipos—[*Crosses to ADELE.*]*—that old carpenter.*

ADELE. Not a carpenter. He's a cabinet-maker.

CSASZAR [*faces ADELE, center.*]. Nice little match.

ADELE. If he was good as a lover for ten years, he's good enough for a husband now.

CSASZAR. He hasn't a cent.

ADELE. I have.

CSASZAR. He's old.

ADELE. That's good. A year or two more, and I'll be old, too.

CSASZAR. You never liked him.

ADELE. That's good. It'll be a nice, quiet affair.

CSASZAR. He gets on your nerves.

ADELE. Not as much as you do.

CSASZAR. And he'll never marry you.

ADELE. You'll see. Does it hurt you?

CSASZAR. Adele . . . dearest Adele. . . .

[*CSASZAR goes nearer to her.*]

ADELE [*pushes him away.*]. Does it hurt you?

CSASZAR. I'm not even able to tell you what I feel just now.

[*Crosses to chair right. Sits.*]

ADELE [*crosses to CSASZAR.*]. I'm able to. You're ashamed, because your vanity's hurt. I know that that's what hurts, you pretty jeweler. That's just why I'm marrying Sipos. I'm throwing you out, otherwise you'll throw me out and then I can go hang myself. [*The door opens. IRMA steps in. She is again carrying in the child.*] What do you want?

IRMA. To get things ready.

ADELE. That's not true. You came in to listen. [*IRMA starts out.*] Where are you going?

IRMA. I'm going out.

ADELE. Why are you going out?

IRMA. You said that I came in because . . .

ADELE [*crosses center.*]. No back talk. Go and do your work. Go on with your work. Are you dragging that child around with you again?

IRMA [*crosses door, down left.*]. Please. Her mother gave her to me just now, and told me to take care of her because she had to go to Morbitzer's for beer. I really don't know what to do any more.

ADELE [*center.*]. Why didn't you go for beer?

IRMA. Because I have to wait on Mr. Sipos, so I can't go. He's home already, he's talking with Mr. Szasz in the court.

[*Puts child on bed. ADELE starts out.*]

CSASZAR [*crosses to chair right.*]. Adele, please . . .

ADELE [*at door, turning quickly.*]. What do you want?

CSASZAR [*crosses to ADELE at door.*]. I should like to talk to you . . . but quietly . . . only five minutes . . . I want to explain to you. . . .

ADELE. I don't want you to explain anything to me.

[*ADELE goes out to courtyard, leaving the door open.*]

CSASZAR. But Adele, please, for God's sake . . . this can't be settled this way. . . .

[*During conversation goes after her. He also stays out. The door remains open.*]

IRMA [*closes the door, crosses to bed.*]. Begging your pardon. Come, Lilly, we'll fix the coat and the pillow for Mr. Sipos. Sit down here while I'm doing it, but don't you move, just stay nice and still. [*Seats him on the bed.*] Give Aunt Irma a nice

kiss— That's right— [*Crosses to bed left. Sits. Crosses to wardrobe and back.*] This is the coat, the house coat. This is what that darling angry one wears so close to his body. [*Smells it.*] It smells of tobacco. Lilly, did you hear what they said— Irma isn't allowed to bathe in rain water. Let Irma just stay dirty. All right. Irma isn't allowed to be blue like a fairy in the moonlight, for whom the handsome aviator comes from the clouds and kneels before her in the happiness of his delight, for a sweet kiss, for true pain, out of the pleasure of his heart. All right. Give me a kiss, Lilly. I gave my breast to the kitten. It lay there so softly. It's a four-day-old kitten, like velvet, like pure, silken velvet. They wouldn't let me do that, either. All right. I'm not allowed to go to the theatre for a whole week. All right. In the afternoon, you'll come up to the attic with me, Lilly, and you'll help me mend the stockings, and then you'll come down with me and look at me ironing. All right? Come pillow, I want to see my darling sleep on you— You smell of tobacco, too. Dear angry one's mistress is unfaithful to him with Pal Csaszar. Please, pillow, tell it to him, when he rests his ear on you. Whisper in his ear that he shouldn't love that unfaithful Adele, he should rather love my faithful heart and he shouldn't be always scolding me. Darling angry one is being cheated. . . . My heart aches so for his sake. Lilly, say: hurts.

LILLY. Hurts.

IRMA. Good. [*Puts down pillow, crosses to chair.*] Now we'll place the chair, see? We'll put it in its place. Its master will be here right

away and then he'll sit down and he'll yell like hell at everybody because he doesn't know that he's so dear to me. Because he's the most beautiful aviator in all this beautiful Budapest, flying aviator, cloud aviator, and there is no more beautiful ray of light than he is, even when he's angry, my only love and chain of roses, my violet forever, and beautiful aviator. Lilly say: aviator!

LILLY. Potato—.

IRMA. Very good. There's another pebble in my shoe. Too late now. I must suffer; it's my fate to be unhappy. The angry one has come. Oh, my secret love.

[*SIPOS comes in.*]

SIPOS [*up center*]. Take that kid off the bed.

IRMA [*taking off child in hurry*]. Oh. . . . Begging your pardon.

SIPOS. Is the bed the place for the child? Never heard of such a thing!

IRMA [*puts baby on trunk. Takes his hat. Puts it on wall*]. Begging your pardon, it was a mistake. How do you please to feel?

SIPOS. I'm always in a bad humor before dinner. Get out with that filthy kid.

[*Takes his coat off.*]

IRMA. I'm taking her out. Come, Lilly. [*Grabs him, takes him out, rushes back.*] Uncle Sipo is angry.

KATI [*off stage*]. Come here, Johannes, and get your face washed and your hair combed.

SIPOS. Coat. [*IRMA hurries to take it, puts it away, in wardrobe. Takes off necktie.*] Necktie. Phew.

IRMA [*hurries to take it, puts it in wardrobe right*]. It is hot, isn't it?

SIPOS [*taking off his collar*]. Didn't ask you. Collar.

IRMA. Collar.

[Hurries to take it, puts it away,
rushes back bringing jacket.]

SIPOS. Don't want it now.

IRMA. Back?

SIPOS. Back.

IRMA. Sleeves?

SIPOS. Sleeves. [rolls up his
sleeves.] Water.

IRMA [rushes to washstand].
Water. Fresh.

[Pours it in.]

SIPOS. Soap.

IRMA [hands it to him]. Soap.

[SIPOS washing his hands.]

"Faded flower of the Spring

Beaten blossom in the rain

All the leaves are whispering—"

SIPOS. Towel.

IRMA. Clean towel. "Beaten blossom in the rain."

SIPOS. What? [Drying himself.]
Slippers.

IRMA [brings them, panting].
Slippers.

SIPOS [sits down]. Shoes.

IRMA [takes off one of his shoes].

One shoe.

[Pats his leg.]

SIPOS. What are you doing?

[Still drying himself, extends
other foot.]

IRMA. It's fate, Mr. Sipos, it's fate.

SIPOS. Other shoe.

IRMA [taking second shoe off].

Other shoe.

SIPOS. First slipper.

IRMA [puts it on]. First slipper.

And . . .

SIPOS. Second slipper.

IRMA. And second slipper.

[Putting it on him.]

SIPOS [stands up, holding towel in
mid-air]. Towel back.

IRMA. Towel back. [Takes towel,
pours water from wash bowl into

slop bucket.] Pouring out, putting
back wash bowl.

SIPOS. Coat—

IRMA. House coat.

SIPOS [sits down to table mean-
while]. Newspaper.

IRMA [brings it from window].
Newspaper.

SIPOS [reading]. Soup.

IRMA. Soup.

[Rushes out, leaving door open.]

SIPOS [hollers while reading paper].

Door!

IRMA [rushes back]. Door!

[Throws kiss, closes door from out-
side. Short pause. SIPOS reading
paper. Enters with soup.] Soup.

SIPOS [stirring soup]. What kind?

IRMA. Noodle.

SIPOS. Cold?

IRMA. Hot.

SIPOS [after tasting it]. Cold.

IRMA [reaches after plate]. Take it
back, and put it on fire?

SIPOS. No. Leave it here.

[Drinks soup. IRMA rushes out into
court, picks sunflower, rushes back,
takes jar from washstand, puts
flower on table.] What's that?

IRMA. Just to make the table
pretty, Mr. Sipos.

[IRMA takes napkin out of nap-
kin ring, places it before him,
pushes salt nearer, puts bread
in place.]

SIPOS. What the hell are you
jumping around for? [Eats.] You
do everything with twice as many
jumps as necessary. Now go easy
about it. Slowly, like this: one, coat;
two, water; three, soap; four, shoe;
five, slipper; six, soup;—slowly.
[Eats.] You might have learned as
much as that in eight years.

IRMA. I was only eleven eight
years ago.

SIPOS. Well, what of it?

IRMA. You said I could have learned that much eight years ago. Well, now I'm nineteen years old, then I was eleven.

SIPOS. What is this? Trying to make conversation?

IRMA. Just a little happy chat, Mr. Sipo.

SIPOS. Don't you open your mouth again.

IRMA. I won't open it. It's closed.

SIPOS. See here!

[*Eats. Pause. IRMA is standing looking at him happily.*]

IRMA [*after pause, softly*]. Begging your pardon.

SIPOS. Where are you going?

IRMA. Nowhere. Begging your pardon.

SIPOS [*stares at her*]. Why do you keep on begging my pardon?

IRMA. Out of respect.

SIPOS. Then take this plate out, out of respect, and bring the meat, out of respect.

[*Reaches for newspaper.*]

IRMA. Yes, Mr. Sipo. [*Takes plate.*] Veal cutlet with spinach.

SIPOS. I didn't ask you.

IRMA. No. But the others are getting only hash. Only Mr. Sipo gets cutlets.

[*IRMA goes out.*]

SIPOS [*without turning*]. Door.

IRMA. I haven't even left it open yet!

SIPOS. You will.

IRMA. No, no.

[*Opens door, from threshold, throws kiss, forgets to close door, hurries away.*]

SIPOS. Door!!!

IRMA [*frightened, rushes back*]. Door! [*Slams it from outside.* SIPOS

shakes head, continues reading. Comes in, with seltzer and steak.] Ice cold. Beautiful, blue bottle. A little bit after the soup. [*Putting meat before him.*] Steak with potatoes.

SIPOS. Just before you said, "Veal cutlet with spinach."

IRMA. That's what I thought, but stupid Irma was mistaken. Excuse me.

SIPOS. That's a grave error.

[*Starts to eat.*]

IRMA. Why?

SIPOS [*pours drink*]. Because now I have to switch my stomach over to steak and potatoes. When you said I'd have veal with spinach, then the stomach got ready for . . . [*Drinks.*] . . . veal and spinach.

IRMA. What?

SIPOS. That is to say, it started that chemical action which is necessary to veal and spinach. Now it's received a sudden surprise. It was preparing for calf and it receives cow; now it must manufacture different digestive fluids such as are suitable to a cow.

[*Eats.*]

IRMA. You have a beautiful mind.

SIPOS. Don't be flattering me all the time.

[*Eats. Pause.*]

IRMA [*without any reason*]. Dear, beautiful aviator.

SIPOS. Who is the aviator?

IRMA. Mr. Sipo.

SIPOS. I am a carpenter.

IRMA. For me you are an aviator. All people who have beautiful dreams are aviators.

SIPOS. What do you know about my dreams?

IRMA. You are my soul's most beautiful dream. You are my avia-

tor who flies down from the clouds to the flowery meadow, to seek his bride.

SIPOS. What the hell are you talking about?

IRMA. Every night I dream that my bridegroom is an aviator and he flies up into the clouds and falls into the sea. And in every one of my dreams, the aviator looks like Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. And falls into the sea. And what do you do?

IRMA. I roam up and down the seashore in a white sheet and my hair is flying in the wind—I hold out my arms toward the sea and sing my mad songs to the storm. Like this—
[Sings.] Isn't that beautiful?

SIPOS. What! That—

IRMA. No. Everything. Life is so beautiful but so sad and my dreams are so sad. And Mr. Sipos is always in—

SIPOS. In the sea.

IRMA. No, in my dreams.

SIPOS. What you need is a good spanking, my child. You've begun to fidget too much. I'd—know how to stop your dreaming, if I were your father.

IRMA. Oh, if you were only my father, Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. That's all I'd need.

IRMA. Filial love must be so beautiful. You darling aviator.

SIPOS. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Trying to flatter me.

IRMA. I'm not ashamed of myself, Mr. Sipos, I'm very proud that I can flatter Mr. Sipos. Dear, beautiful aviator.

[Takes plate and goes out, leaving the door open.]

SIPOS. Door!

IRMA [frightened]. Yes. Door.

[Closes it. SIPOS pours wine and seltzer, reads paper. IRMA comes in with dessert, whispers close to his ear.] Jelly pudding with nuts and sugar.

[Puts it down.]

SIPOS. Stop tickling me. Jelly pudding.

IRMA. Sure. The others got it with bread crumbs, but only Mr. Sipos is getting nuts.

SIPOS [eating]. Ah yes, that reminds me. All over the city they're saying that you danced naked in the yard at dawn.

IRMA. They're talking about it there, too?

SIPOS. I had some business in City Hall to-day and the mayor was talking about it.

IRMA. Oh—oh—

SIPOS. The members of Parliament were mentioning it, too. The government offices were also full of the news.

IRMA. The government offices?

SIPOS. All, all the secretaries of state talking of nothing else.

IRMA. Mr. Sipos, you are joking, I know. But I know where you got this from. Mr. Szasz is saying all these things about me, although it was in secret that I bathed in the rain barrel. Nobody could have seen me.

SIPOS. Yes, yes. And who was it that adopted the kitten? You were nursing the kitten and the whole neighborhood is laughing at you.

IRMA. They're talking about that, too?

SIPOSA. Every one in Budapest.

IRMA. That is Mr. Szasz's doing, and I know why—he tried to kiss me.

SIPOS. Why didn't you slap his face?

IRMA. I? I should slap a boarder?

SIPOS. Don't you try to play the innocent. You're making eyes at every one. I'll have to talk to Miss Adele, and we will send you back to the country.

IRMA. I'm not making eyes at any one.

SIPOS. You're making eyes at me, too, but it isn't going to do you any good.

IRMA. That's different. Yes, I do make eyes at Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. You even admit it, you shameless thing.

IRMA. Why do you say that to me?

SIPOS. You dare look me in the eye and say that you make eyes at me.

IRMA. That's different. Yes, I make eyes at you because of my misery and love—

SIPOS. What—?

IRMA. It's misery and dream of love.

SIPOS. I never heard such rot—get out of here.

[*Makes a motion toward her.*

IRMA *jumps away.*]

IRMA. It's wounded love. Irma's going to die, Mr. Sipos—

SIPOS. What?

IRMA. If Mr. Sipos gets married. I'll never live through that.

SIPOS. What do you mean if I get married?

IRMA. Get married and your wife will give birth to children. And how will I live through all those painful years?

SIPOS. Where do you get that, if I get married?

IRMA. If you'll give me your

word of honor that you won't give me away, then I'll tell you.

SIPOS. Now that's enough. Get out of here. I give you my word of honor! What are you talking about? All this rot about my getting married! I don't even know why I waste my time talking to you, you brat; get out and get to your work, and I'll take care that you are sent back to the country, because we can't be responsible for your ruin. What are you up to with Mr. Csaszar? What? Why do you clasp your hands? Answer me. What did you do with Mr. Csaszar?

IRMA. Mr. Sipos, please, I won't even answer you because this is so insulting.

SIPOS. What do I care if it is insulting? Bring me the coffee and get out!

IRMA [*trembling, with growing passion. At table*]. Why do you treat me like this, my beautiful, only aviator, you as well as all the others. Why do you treat me as though I were the dirt under your beautiful feet? I don't care if you do drive me away, now I can't stand it any more. Don't get married; I don't care if you do hit me. . . . [*Backing away from him.*] I confess to you, my only dear, secret love, my dream, how I've loved you since I was a little baby. Worshiped you, you darling, dear, angry one, and you will be responsible for my death, and it was because of you that I nursed the kitten, because in my dreams I was your wife and I gave birth to your child, and I was your woman, and the kitten was our child, and Mr. Szasz should croak because he dirtied my love, and I bathe on account of you and suffer on account of you and stand

for things on account of you, and I get only kicks from everybody because no one understands my broken heart. And my soul is panting near your lips and all you want to do is to spank me.

[Leans against wall as she weeps.]

SIPOS *[a little embarrassed]*. Stop your snuffling and get out of here.

IRMA *[bawling]*. It's all the same now, anyway.

SIPOS *[embarrassed]*. Don't you dare let me see you again.

IRMA *[starts out, pauses on threshold, crying]*. I know, I know: "Door!" *[Closes door behind her.]*

[SIPOS crosses to window up center, takes pipe, at left of table.]

ADELE enters.]

ADELE. Here's the black coffee!

SIPOS. We mustn't keep this child here another moment. She has no mother, no father, you are her nearest relative, we are responsible for her. Now she is beginning to be a woman. She is restless, and all that theatre-going is not doing her any good.

[Crosses back to chair left of table. Sits.]

ADELE. Well, why shouldn't she go to the National Theatre? Anyway, I let her see nothing but the classics.

SIPOS. That's where you find most of the dirt.

ADELE *[above table]*. Well, I didn't write them.

SIPOS. Soon she'll be twenty years old. And some fine morning she will wake up and find that some one has—

ADELE. I think some one has already.

SIPOS. Who?

ADELE. What do I know? Mr. Csaszar . . . Mr. Szasz . . . Perhaps both of them.

SIPOS. Is there sugar in it?

ADELE. Two lumps. I want to talk to you.

[Crosses up for chair.]

SIPOS. Well, go on—

ADELE *[brings chair and sits]*. How are you feeling?

SIPOS. I always feel rotten on Sunday, even after dinner.

ADELE *[takes toothpick]*. Come to think of it, always. No matter how you feel we must settle this. Within two weeks you'll have to marry me.

SIPOS *[puts down the spoon]*. Do you mind saying that again?

ADELE. Within two weeks you will have to marry me.

SIPOS. You don't say!

[Continues with his coffee.]

ADELE. This is no joking matter. I am serious. It would be much wiser if you started to think this over instead of arguing about it now. Every moment is precious.

SIPOS. What's the hurry?

ADELE. Because—

SIPOS. Why?

ADELE. Because it's due.

SIPOS. What is it? . . . You mean that . . .

ADELE. No, no. I have just come to realize it. I know that you don't like to think about it, you just keep on letting it go by, day by day. . . . It will be the same to-morrow and the day after . . . but it can't go on. Some day you are up against it.

SIPOS. It isn't possible.

ADELE. Why?

SIPOS. Because I am a poor man.

ADELE. You were always that.

SIPOS. I can't have my wife support me. True, I haven't been pay-

ing for board. But at least I owed it to you.

ADELE. You'll keep on owing it to me. Or what do you think? I've got to maintain my position in this neighborhood. They think a lot of me, but every one knows that we are living together . . . and still you don't want to make me your wife?

SIPOS. We've always said that that was not necessary; you are free, I am free. It was better that way.

ADELE. I am free?

SIPOS. Well, no . . . not that way.

ADELE. In what way, then? You have all kinds of liberty, a woman has only one kind, that's certain. And in that one I am not free.

[*Door opens, IRMA comes in.*]

IRMA [*excited. Crosses down above table*]. Please, Mr. Sipos, Miss Adele told me that I should tell you that I was to the watchmaker's and that the watchmaker said that the watch isn't ready yet.

SIPOS. All right—

IRMA. It won't be ready until next week.

SIPOS. All right. [*Long pause.*] Well, are you going to stand there until next week?

IRMA. Next week? No.

[*Goes out. Pause.*]

SIPOS. Very well, I'll remember this and we'll talk about it in the fall.

ADELE. No, my boy, this isn't a question of the seasons or the way you usually do things. How can you expect to go on the way you're going? You have a few worries, too. Now you are angry because I got you out of the rut. I know you.

SIPOS. I'm not the kind that would make a husband. I am a born bachelor.

ADELE. Well, I'm a born wife. And I gave you my best ten years.

SIPOS. But before those ten years, you had eight years which you did not give to me.

ADELE. You say that now, when I am reminding you of your duty.

SIPOS. I always said it. If not to you, to myself. Don't excite me. Because that's the most painful thing in my life, don't force me to speak of it.

ADELE. Well, then, when I was twenty, I was chambermaid for the Countess Seeburg and I became the mistress of the son of the Countess Seeburg, and the result of that for me was a house and child. Now you know.

SIPOS. Now I know what you mean when you say it as calmly as that. I can't speak of it as calmly as you do, because the blood goes to my head every time I think of it. Just to show you that I'm not trying to get out of this, perhaps I'll marry you if you want it so badly.

ADELE. It's your damned duty!

SIPOS. Look here, don't excite me any further. I am not damned and I have no damned duties, and I am a free being and I do what I please, do you understand?

[*Taking wine glass.*]

ADELE. You will marry me.

SIPOS. Are you trying to make me lose my temper?

ADELE. I tell you. You'll—

SIPOS. All right, maybe I'll marry you. It's what I ought to do. It's the moral thing to do. . . .

ADELE. Yes, and I've got the money.

SIPOS. You . . . I . . . I . . .

ADELE. Rest a little, my dear. There isn't a drop of blood in your

cheeks. Don't stare at me so, I'm not afraid of you. You don't have to act before me. Inasmuch as you're going to marry me, in the end, you could have done it in a nicer way. But because you are a worn-out, old man, you're nasty about asking for my hand. You're nasty, and I had to force you even into that.

SIPOS. You never loved me.

ADELE. That's not true. Once I loved you for a week.

SIPOS. The first week.

ADELE. No-o-o-o! Then I really didn't. There was another week. Or two weeks. You men never know these things. It was when you had pneumonia and I thought you were going to die. You had high fever and you couldn't keep the food on your stomach and you said you'd get disgusted with me—now, now I disgust you, because you are disgusting. During that one week, I loved you. And then many nights, when you thought that we were almost in heaven together, I hated you so that I cried until morning.

SIPOS. For the Count.

ADELE. Yes, for him.

SIPOS. And even now you don't love me.

ADELE. No.

SIPOS. And you want me to marry you?

ADELE. Yes.

SIPOS. Why me?

ADELE. Because I've made up my mind that *you* are to marry me.

SIPOS. And if I don't love you either? And if I hate you as much as you hate me?

ADELE. Even then you will be the one to marry me.

SIPOS [*shouting*]. Why?

ADELE. Don't shout. Because I

want it. I'm not crazy about you, don't be afraid, that's not the reason. You are the lowest man in this world.

SIPOS. You . . . Now, you listen to me. . . . My dear, now the great announcement is going to take place. Calmly and coolly. I'll not marry you. If you want it, everything can remain as it was; if not, I'll take my things and go. Do you understand? I'll show you that even I am a man. And now I've had just enough of all this. And if you'll say another word, I'll—I'll— [*Rises threatening.*] Well! Now you've heard it. I told you that you'd be surprised. Now you've heard it.

[*The door opens, IRMA quietly comes in, stands at door a moment and goes out closing door.*]

ADELE [*pulls him back in chair*]. It's no use working up such hatred in each other. Please sit down for a moment and let's be sensible about this.

SIPOS. Don't take it so lightly. Don't try to be foxy now. You are very scared now, because you know that you've gone too far and it's all up. It's better to talk nicely, quietly, and it is just as well that things came to a head, ugly or not, because now it's over, at least. It'll hurt you—oh, don't fear, it'll hurt me, too, but now, at least, we'll part, and then somehow we'll patch up our lives, you here, I there—

[*Pause.*]

ADELE. Well, Lajos. Now, I'll tell you something. It's your fault, that I'm telling you. I didn't want to hurt you, but you're responsible. I've got to tell you something now. I'm in love with Pal Csaszar.

SIPOS [*starting*]. I know!

ADELE. Thank God. At least you can see that until now I was considerate, and now I'm honest.

SIPOS. That isn't true.

ADELE. What?

SIPOS. That you are honest. If you were honest, you would have confessed this the first day.

ADELE. What first day? Was there a first day? Which was the first day? There are days and I am in love and every day is the first day and every day is the last day.

SIPOS. You are his mistress!

ADELE. What a coward you are. How I'd hate you now if I loved you. Is that the way to talk now? Can I be his mistress? Could all this that's happening here have happened if I were his mistress? . . . Lajos . . . Lajos . . . help me, help my old stupid brain . . . help my old heart, help me! I am in love with a young man. Do you know what that means? For love of God . . . don't make me leave you to run after him and lower myself. Don't make me give him money, and don't let him beat me, don't make me kiss his hands for it. . . . Lajos, you are a wise man. . . . I am thirty-six years old and he is twenty-three. . . . Don't you see how this is going to end? Don't you know me? Can't you understand why I cried to you from the depths of my misery asking you to marry me? Take me away, protect me!

SIPOS [*wipes his forehead*]. There is only one question. How far did you go with him?

ADELE. Would you dare to ask me that if I had as much as looked at him? Who was it that told you the whole thing? Wasn't it I? Would I have told you?

SIPOS. I am an honorable man. If you want to, you can go to him without thought of revenge, but answer me honestly. Does he know that you love him?

ADELE. If he knew, I wouldn't let him stay a moment.

SIPOS. And there is one more question. He loves you? Does he love you?

ADELE. Don't torture me.

SIPOS. Answer, or I'll— He loves you, doesn't he?

ADELE. Terribly.

SIPOS. How do you know?

ADELE. A woman always knows that.

SIPOS. And why didn't you throw him out? Why didn't you tell me this?

ADELE. But I did tell you! I just now told you! I can't throw him out. He is acting decently—even though he is suffering. That was just what moved me so.

SIPOS. That's not suffering. Love is not suffering.

ADELE. No? Then what is suffering?

SIPOS. An operation is suffering. Where they don't put you to sleep. That's suffering. And if one is disappointed in some one in whom he believed. And there is still another question.

ADELE. God, why are there so many questions? Don't you know everything already? Don't you understand everything already?

SIPOS. Did you let him think that you love him?

ADELE [*lachrymose*]. I'd rather you beat me than ask me that—

SIPOS. He doesn't even suspect?

ADELE. How can he possibly suspect?

SIPOS. All right, my dear. Give me a little soda water.

ADELE [*pours it for him*]. Wine in it too?

SIPOS. No, thank you. [*Drinks, but not much.*] Yes . . . well, now.

ADELE. Rest a bit.

SIPOS [*dazed*]. Yes.

ADELE [*very tenderly*]. Now there are lots of things bothering you; don't excite yourself, dear, it was enough for to-day. Wouldn't you rather lie down a little?

SIPOS [*gazing before him*]. Yes, yes, later.

ADELE [*kisses his forehead*]. How hot your head is.

SIPOS [*absently*]. Yes. [*Knocking on door.*] Come in. [CSASZAR enters from courtyard.] Well . . . Mr. Csaszar. [*Gets up. Embarrassing pause. SIPOS walks up and down.*] What can I do for you, Mr. Csaszar?

ADELE [*resentfully*]. Please!

CSASZAR [*self-consciously*]. Miss Adele, I wanted to ask you something . . . but I beg your pardon, it seems I've interrupted your conversation.

ADELE. It doesn't matter.

CSASZAR. Well, I took the liberty of mentioning it on Friday already . . . that Martin Brausz, the butcher, has a wagon . . . but of course you know. . . . The butcher wagon . . . which can be changed into a carriage with seats. He's just had it repainted, it's very nice, and he has two good tan horses. The carriage is at my disposal for all this Sunday afternoon. Six people can comfortably be seated on it. And I thought if you, perhaps, cared to take a little trip—

SIPOS. She doesn't care to take a trip anywhere—

ADELE. But . . . thank you very much, Mr. Csaszar.

CSASZAR. Oh, you're quite welcome, Miss Adele.

SIPOS. Especially on a butcher wagon.

CSASZAR [*with a sad smile*]. Well, of course, as yet I have no automobile.

SIPOS. That we know. [*Strained pause.*] Is that all that you wanted, Mr. Csaszar?

CSASZAR. Oh, yes. . . .

SIPOS. Well, then, there is something I wish to mention to Mr. Csaszar.

CSASZAR. Yes, Mr. Sipos, at your disposal.

ADELE [*worried*]. Please!

SIPOS. It is my desire to inform you that you are not to give money for ribbons to the servant girl.

CSASZAR. Now wait a minute.

SIPOS [*interrupting*]. We brought that girl here while she was still a child and we are responsible for her welfare.

ADELE. But, Lajos.

SIPOS. Don't you Lajos me. . . . I'll not tolerate that any one of the gentlemen, should it be even Mr. Csaszar himself. . . .

CSASZAR. But really it's a misunderstanding. . . .

SIPOS [*shouting him down*]. . . . should it be even Mr. Csaszar himself, touch this child. If that is the sort of man Mr. Csaszar is, let him go to the street for girls.

CSASZAR. But, please, Miss Adele is my witness. . . .

SIPOS. Miss Adele is not your witness. I'll not stand for that.

CSASZAR. But, please . . . what am

I to do? . . . You don't even listen to me. . . .

ADELE. My dear, Mr. Csaszar . . .

SIPOS. He has convinced you, perhaps, but he can't convince me. What I said, I said.

CSASZAR. Well then . . . I have nothing to say. I really regret, Miss Adele . . .

ADELE [*nervously*]. All right, let it go at that.

CSASZAR. If I had known that out of such a trifle . . .

SIPOS. I've heard enough from you.

CSASZAR. All right . . . all right.

SIPOS. We've had enough.

CSASZAR. As you say. [*Strained pause.*] Please forgive me for having disturbed you.

[*CSASZAR goes out. SIPOS sits down to table, puts his head on his arm. ADELE goes to him, sighs, pats his head. This goes on for a short while.*]

SIPOS. I am an old idiot.

ADELE [*once more smooths his hair and goes away from him*]. Lie down, sleep a little, dear. You're used to that after dinner. That's what's the matter with you. That's why you are nervous. [*SIPOS wipes his eyes. ADELE looks at her wrist watch.*] Oh, Lajos—oh, Lajos—

SIPOS. What about my watch?

ADELE. Irma has already told you—

SIPOS. Oh, yes. Yes—I'd forgotten—I'll lie down a little, I have a headache.

ADELE [*calls at door*]. Irma! [*Comes back.*] What time shall I wake you?

SIPOS. At four.

ADELE. Bye-bye, dear.

[*Goes out left. SIPOS sighs.*]

IRMA *comes in with the child. Kisses child.*]

IRMA. Go back, Lilly. Irma will come soon and make mud pies.

[*Child goes.*]

SIPOS [*his elbows on table, his head on his hands*]. Make my bed, I'm going to lie down.

IRMA [*all the time nervously watching SIPOS. Fixes cover and pats pillow in place*]. Why are you so worried, Mr. Sipos?

SIPOS. Because I've got reason enough to worry.

IRMA. I'm sorry when Mr. Sipos is so sad . . . darling Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. How do you happen to be so fond of me to-day?

IRMA. I've always loved Mr. Sipos.

[*Bends her head.*]

SIPOS. As a turtle-dove loves its mate.

[*Laughs.*]

IRMA. You're making fun of me.

SIPOS. I'm not making fun of you so very much, just now, my child. Just now, I'm a little disgusted with myself. . . . With everybody, child.

IRMA. Not with Irma.

SIPOS. That's the saddest part of it, my dear, that just now if I look all over the world in Europe, Asia, Africa, America. . . . In this whole world I have only one friend, my child, and you are the one. [*Quickly, sternly.*]

Well, don't be staring at me. Let's go, one, two, lying down after dinner! Pillow!

IRMA. Ready.

SIPOS. Chair to the bed! [*IRMA pushes chair to bed.*] Wine! [*IRMA puts it there.*] Soda! [*IRMA puts it there.*] Glass! [*IRMA puts it there.*] Ash tray! [*IRMA puts it there. SIPOS sitting on edge of bed.*]

Slipper! [*IRMA takes off his slippers. He lies down.*] And now not another word. Quiet lying down, then leaving and letting me alone. Pulling down shades on account of flies.

[*Turns toward wall. IRMA pulls down the shade. Tiptoes to the table, quietly removes things.*]

LILLY [*off stage*]. Irma! Irma!

IRMA. Ps-st. . . . Be quiet, Lilly. . . . We'll go out and make mud pies. . . . [*Listens. To SIPOS.*] Do you want something?

SIPOS. No, my child, I just sighed.

IRMA. Please don't sigh.

SIPOS. All right, my dear, I'll sigh no more.

[*Short pause.*]

IRMA [*softly to the sleeping SIPOS*]. Now I can adore you, you martyr. . . . In Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, only you—no one else . . . just now I am a poor servant girl. . . . But I'll go for you to the

ball . . . in a golden dress . . . in glass slippers . . . now he can't hear it, now I can recite my poem—"Faded flower of the Spring, beaten blossom in the rain, all the leaves are whispering that my heart is full of pain"—A Poem by Irma Szabo.—Maybe he is only making believe he is sleeping, maybe he can really hear it—

[*Listens, then takes the child on her left arm, with her right hand carries the dishes, tiptoes to door, pushes it open with her foot and goes out.*]

LILLY. Irma! Irma!

[*The door remains open. A moment's pause, then IRMA comes back without child and dishes, stands on threshold.*]

IRMA [*whispers*]. Hush, Lilly, Uncle Sipo is asleep.

[*Very slowly, very carefully shuts the door from the outside.*]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

[*SCENE: The verandah and a little flowered courtyard of ADELE's house.*]

At the back of yard a festive table, with wedding-guests seated around it. Down stage left there is a door leading to kitchen. Upper right, a door leading to house. On the verandah a stand with drinking glasses. A small beer-keg. Lined up next to the railing, on the ground, a multitude of bottles, cooling in pots and other receptacles. Soda bottles, to the front, standing on the verandah. A table, left, set for the servants, covered with

a red cloth. Summer. Toward dusk.

AT RISE: *The feast is drawing to a close. It has been going on since noon. General merriment, quiet laughter, conversation.*

Seated around the table, SIPOS dressed as groom, ADELE in her bridal dress. CSASZAR, VIOLA, STETNER and other guests, men and women. A PRIEST and the CAPTAIN of a boat among them. KATI, the janitress, is busy removing dishes, and keeps on walking in and out of the kitchen. The JANITOR is busy with the bottles that are on the verandah.

IRMA *stands at the glass-stand, and is busy among a pile of dishes. She keeps walking between her post and the kitchen.* LILLY, *dressed as a hus-sar, is seated at the table of the verandah left. During the following, IRMA walks to LILLY several times. In front of the child is a stein of beer.* ADELE'S MOTHER, *an apparently well-to-do-country woman, in her best dress, has just left the festive table to come to the verandah.*

MOTHER. They want black coffee! They want black coffee!

IRMA [*at table right*]. We've made fresh coffee twice already.

MOTHER [*coming onto porch center*]. Is there enough coffee?

IRMA. I don't know.

ADELE [*crosses toward kitchen*]. Kati, Kati—

[KATI *comes in from the kitchen.*]

MOTHER. Have we enough ground coffee?

KATI [*shouts to kitchen*]. Cook, have we enough ground coffee?

COOK [*appears at kitchen door*]. Just enough for one more round.

JULCSA [*off stage left*]. Cook, Cook—

COOK. Making it—making—it.

JANITOR. And when do we eat, begging your pardon? It's a quarter to seven and we haven't had time for a bite yet.

ADELE. You'll get something later.

[ADELE *returns to the table and all guests cheer.*]

JANITOR [*crosses to steps and looks into court*]. Cheering the bride is all right, but when do we eat?

KATI [*at table left*]. She only gets married once in a lifetime, can't you be patient?

LILLY. I want my beer.

KATI. Shut up, Johann.

COOK [*enters and calls over porch railing*]. Madame, the duck will be ready in a minute, and what lovely duck it was!

IRMA. I saw it while it was still alive. It was a black duck.

[*Crossing to table left.*]

COOK. What? Do you think it was just one duck?

IRMA. One beautiful black duck; it looked like a swan.

COOK. There were six whole ducks!

[*Cook exits into kitchen.*]

MOTHER [*crosses to table left*]. I hope you are not giving the baby beer.

IRMA. It was his father that gave him the beer. I told him not to.

MOTHER. Adele, they're giving the baby beer!

IRMA. See! Didn't I tell you?

[*The JANITOR returns as she crosses to the table right.*]

JANITOR [*center*]. One steinful wouldn't hurt him.

IRMA. It will so!

[*MOTHER crosses to JANITOR, admonishing him in whispers.*]

COOK [*from the kitchen door*]. Kati, what did you do with the coffee-grinder? Kati, I'm asking you?

KATI. You used it last—

COOK. What did you do with it?

JULCSA [*calls from kitchen*]. It is here, cook.

COOK [*exits shouting*]. All right, I've got it.

MOTHER [*center and to JANITOR*]. You shouldn't give the little boy beer. I never gave my little Adele beer and look what she is to-day.

[*SIPOS leaves table and comes forward to verandah.*]

SIPOS. My dear mother-in-law, you are always around the kitchen. That won't do at all. Go back to the guests. There's Captain Gal from the Hungarian River Steamers, Inc. Go and entertain him for a while. [*Crosses to IRMA, at table right.*] Well, what about the coffee? Why is there no coffee?

IRMA. Why are you yelling at me again? I'm not the cook. How do I know why there is no coffee? [*Starts for kitchen left with pile of dishes.*] I'm working like a dog.

SIPOS. All right, don't be bawling all the time. [*Follows her to kitchen door, calls in.*] What about the coffee?

MOTHER. It's being made already, don't lose your temper.

SIPOS. Coffee—coffee—

COOK'S VOICE [*from kitchen*]. Making it! Making it!

SIPOS [*steps to JANITOR who is left of table at right*]. How many bottles of wine did you bring up?

JANITOR [*right of center*]. I don't know, sir.

SIPOS [*center*]. What? You don't know how many bottles you brought up from the cellar?

JANITOR [*at table right*]. Well, sir, I counted as far as forty-six, but they kept on hollering all the time: wine, wine, and I just kept on carrying it like it was kindling wood, in a basket.

SIPOS [*crosses to table at right*]. What kind is this?

JANITOR. I got them sort of mixed by this time. [*Picks up bottle.*] This is Capak wine. [*Sets down bottle. Picks up another bottle.*] And this is Italian Risling.

[*Puts down bottle.*]

SIPOS. Well, take care that they

get through with the Capak first, because it's muddy. You can tell it by holding it to the light. His Reverence and the Captain get Risling. The muddy wine will do for the rest.

[*IRMA passes by, crosses to table right.*]

JANITOR. It's much worse, sir, that there isn't much seltzer. These ten bottles are all we have.

SIPOS [*turns to IRMA, crosses to her*]. I knew it. This is the only thing that was left to you, you fool—I knew there'd be none.

IRMA. What am I to do if they drank it all up?

SIPOS. That's why it's here, you fool, to be drunk. How many bottles did you order?

IRMA. There were thirty.

SIPOS. Outrageous! You ordered only thirty bottles of soda for my wedding? There should have been sixty!

IRMA. But there were only thirty in blue bottles.

SIPOS. What has that to do with it?

IRMA. That's my favorite, beloved color.

SIPOS. Do you hear what she is saying— [*To JANITOR.*] Send over to the Morbitzers' immediately for all the seltzer they have.

IRMA [*center*]. I am the saddest guest at your wedding, Mr. Sipo.

[*SIPOS left of center.*]

SIPOS. You are no guest here, you are a servant. What's the matter with you?

IRMA. When it came to the congratulations, you gave everybody a kiss, except me, although I am in love with you, Mr. Sipo, and you know it very well.

SIPOS. Well, come here, you brat. You'll get one.

IRMA. Now I don't want it any more! I'll wait till you get drunk.

SIPOS. What?

IRMA. Then you'll give me two.

[*Rushes to kitchen left.*]

SIPOS [*to JANITOR*]. Well, what about seltzer!

JANITOR [*shouting toward kitchen*]. Send Julcsa to Morbitzer's for seltzer.

VIOLA. Aunt Adele, that is disgusting.

LILLY. Seltzer! Seltzer!

SIPOS [*loud roar at table*]. Don't shout!— The Parish Priest is seated at the table. Go in there and tell her.

JULCSA [*appears at kitchen door*]. I'm going already. I'm going—I'm going.

[*Rushes to courtyard and disappears right.*]

COOK. Go along and get the seltzer!

[*Enters from kitchen after JULCSA, who goes to center through courtyard and out gate at back center. Enter IRMA and KATI who go to table right. Both turn to SIPOS who is at entrance center, KATI first.*]

SIPOS [*center*]. Just like a lunatic asylum. Why all this bustle? Calmness and system! [*KATI exits to kitchen mumbling, stops and kisses LILLY.*] One, two, seltzer, wine, coffee. One, two, duck, goose, strudel, watermelon. Everything topsy-turvy. What about the gypsies!

[*Crosses to JANITOR who is at table left.*]

JANITOR. They haven't come yet.

SIPOS [*center*]. What about the gypsies?

KATI [*runs in from kitchen*]. Aren't the gypsies here yet? I'll see if they have come—

[*She crosses. Exit Cook.*]

SIPOS [*crosses to kitchen door. Enter Cook*]. What about the gypsies?

COOK. What do I know about gypsies, I have work to do in the kitchen.

SIPOS [*crosses to JANITOR who is at center*]. I told you at seven o'clock this morning that I wanted three gypsies for my wedding. What time did you tell them?

JANITOR [*left of center*]. I asked them to be here at six and it is that already. Can't you get married without gypsies? They'll be here all right. They've sent their little piano— Such unpunctuality—

[*KATI enters from house.*]

SIPOS. Are they there?

KATI. No, but Bailor is at the other door to let them in when they come.

SIPOS. Such unpunctuality—

[*Commotion heard in the house.*]

JANITOR. Maybe they've come now. [*Exits into house, looks and runs back to stage, calling.*] The gypsies have come! The gypsies have come!

[*Commotion and noise as guests rush to door to see the gypsies.*]

SIPOS [*who has crossed and looked into door right*]. It isn't the gypsies. These are just the photographer.

[*The PHOTOGRAPHER and his ASSISTANT enter from house door at the right. GUESTS return to the table, leaving the PHOTOGRAPHER and his ASSISTANT on the stage.*]

PHOTOGRAPHER [*center at step*].

Ah, I have the pleasure to wish you good evening! I am the photographer with my American machine but my Hungarian good wishes.

MOTHER. That's what I call a perfect gentleman.

PHOTOGRAPHER [*crosses to table*]. My name is Oasako Szinszi— My cards, ladies and gentlemen, my cards— And now I extend my most fervent congratulations to the young . . . groom.

SIPOS. Thanks, come, come, less talk and more picture-taking.

PHOTOGRAPHER [*wandering about stage*]. Now let me see, where is the best place? Now let me see— Ah, my little man— [*Puts his hand on LILLY's head at table left.*] Ah, here, right here will do if that is agreeable to the young groom. . . . I see it is. Will you come this way, ladies and gentlemen? [*Crowd groups; much chatter.*] Ah, that bench! Will you kindly bring that bench forward? Thank you.

TWO MEN. You're welcome!

PHOTOGRAPHER. Will you two gentlemen kindly stand on the bench? Thank you.

TWO MEN. You're welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Will the two— [*Center.*] Ladies, kindly sit down in front— [*They do so.*] Thank you!

VIOLA. You're welcome!

PHOTOGRAPHER. That will do very nicely. Now let me see. Ah, mother, do you mind getting up on the bench? [*She does.*] Thank you.

MOTHER. You're welcome.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Now will you, sir, kindly step right in front—

CSASZAR. I am at your disposal!—

PHOTOGRAPHER. I am ready now—

MOTHER. But—

PHOTOGRAPHER. Ah! The bride

and groom. Step this way, I almost forgot the bride and groom—

SIPOS. It is about time you thought about us—

[*They take their places.*]

PHOTOGRAPHER. Close to the bench— Ready now—

IRMA [*at kitchen door, left*]. Mr. Sipos, please!

SIPOS. Don't disturb me now. What do you want?

IRMA. I won't let them take my picture.

SIPOS. Don't worry, we weren't going to.

IRMA. That's why I'm saying it.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Very well, now quiet, please—smile!

JANITOR [*crosses down center in front of camera*]. If Julcsa brings the seltzer, put it on the ice here—

[*Shouts to get him out of way.*]

IRMA. Tell that to Julcsa—

SIPOS. Come, Kati, have your picture taken.

[*KATI enters, goes to table, takes*

LILLY and crosses to group.

LILLY cries.]

LILLY. I don't want my picture taken—

KATI. Come, Johann, we are going to have pictures taken.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Smile now, everybody. You, sir, smile; you can if you make up your mind to it.

COOK [*from kitchen door*]. Kati, please ask Miss Adele for the key. We've run short of lump sugar.

KATI. Can't now, I'm going to have my picture taken.

[*Joins the group.*]

JANITOR. Never mind now. We're going to have our picture taken.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Close in, close in there, close to the lady. Now quiet,

please! Ready now! Is the flashlight ready?

ASSISTANT. Yes, Mr. Szinszi.

SIPOS. Cook, come and have your picture taken.

COOK [*enters and joins group*]. What should I be doing having my picture taken? It's never been taken before—

PHOTOGRAPHER. Quickly, please, quickly— [*Pushes her across to group*]. That's very nice— But you are hiding that cute little baby; that's it.

SIPOS. Silence, please. Now, all of you be still, everybody is going to be taken, servants, guests and everybody.

[PHOTOGRAPHER *looks through camera*.]

PHOTOGRAPHER. That's very nice. Ready now! Ready!

SIPOS. Irma!

IRMA. I'm not going.

SIPOS. If you don't come, you stay!

KATI. Come on, Irma.

IRMA. No, I won't.

ADELE. Well, then, don't.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Ladies and gentlemen, I'll ask you to smile once more. You too, sir, I'm sure you can if you will only make up your mind to it. Now let me see—

ASSISTANT. Are you ready—I am ready when you are, Mr. Szinszi—

PHOTOGRAPHER. Now we are ready. Keep smiling. One . . . two. . . .

JANITOR. Wait a minute, wait a minute—

SIPOS. What are you hollering? What are you hollering?

JANITOR. There's Julcsa coming with the seltzer.

SIPOS. Come here with the seltzer and have your picture taken.

[JULCSA *stands in front and is*

dragged back into the group.]

PHOTOGRAPHER. Now, please. Everybody will kindly remain quiet and everybody kindly look at me. Don't be frightened. I am working with an American flashlight—my Hungarian sense of what a group should be. Baby, look—don't be frightened, my little man. Quiet please. . . . One, two. . . .

COOK. Kati, don't forget the key for the lump sugar.

ALL. Pss-st.

SIPOS. Be quiet—

PHOTOGRAPHER. How do they expect me to take the picture. . . .

ASSISTANT. I don't know, Mr. Szinszi—

LILLY [*starts to cry*]. Irma—Irma!

IRMA. Come quick, Lilly!

[*Crosses to LILLY, takes him out to left. They exit into closet*.]

PHOTOGRAPHER [*angrily*]. Well, I'm starting the count once again. Silence, please, everybody and look at me. Smile, everybody! Now . . . ready. One . . . two. . . . Smile. . . . Three.

[*Flashlight explodes. All rush, shout and return to table*,]

PHOTOGRAPHER and his ASSISTANT *exit through the gate*.]

ADELE [*center to KATI as she crosses to the kitchen*]. Scrape to all the duck that was left on the plates and put it into the ice box for later. Put the pickles on the ice, too— [*Turning to MOTHER who is at table left*]. Mama, I can't let you tire yourself. Go back to them. Go back to the table, you are the honor guest here.

[*They kiss each other*.]

MOTHER. I'm so happy that everybody respects you so much. What

distinguished guests. The Priest is here.

ADELE. And Captain Gal, from the Hungarian River Steamers, Incorporated—

MOTHER. Adele—Adele—

ADELE. Believe me, after ten years of work, all this honor feels good. I earned it with my honesty and my good manners.

MOTHER [*crosses to center*]. Yes, my dear, have you taken care of the cabbage soup for the morning?

ADELE. Yes, mother, I've taken care of it.

MOTHER. With sausages?

ADELE. Of course, mother, with sausages.

MOTHER. Cut up?

ADELE. Now you go back to the table, mama.

MOTHER. I'd be so happy if you'd let me help.

ADELE. No, no. [*Takes dishes from her hand.*] I'm the boss here. To-day and forever. Please go back to your place. What would you like to have now, mother?

MOTHER. A little coffee with milk.

ADELE. Cook!

[*Shouts to kitchen.*]

COOK. Yes, madam!

ADELE. A great big cup of coffee with lots of cream for my mother, immediately. A quart of coffee and cream every half hour for my mother, until she goes to bed. And then put some next to her bed in case she wakes up in the night.

[*In the meanwhile, MOTHER goes back to table.*]

COOK [*from kitchen door*]. Yes, Miss Adele. And please give me the key, we have no more lump sugar.

ADELE [*sees IRMA coming back with LILLY to table left from closet*].

In a moment! [*To IRMA.*] Why was there no seltzer? Is the seltzer all right now?

[*IRMA comes front, puts LILLY in his place, takes beer away from him and places it on table before him.*]

IRMA [*right of table left*]. Why shouldn't it be all right now?

ADELE [*below table left*]. You talk as though you'd brought it. Poor Julcsa had to run for it. The poor thing was almost left out of the picture on account of it.

IRMA. I was left out, too.

ADELE. We wanted you to be in it.

IRMA. Yes, but I didn't want to.

ADELE. Will you shut up?

IRMA. Yes, ma'am—no, ma'am.

JANITOR [*center from courtyard*]. Miss Adele, please, Irma drank some whisky. That's why she's acting this way.

ADELE. What's that, you drank whisky?

IRMA. Yes, ma'am.

ADELE. Just let me hear that again—

IRMA. You'll hear it because I'll drink some more.

ADELE. What's this? Wait, you'll get it to-morrow.

IRMA. Where will we be to-morrow?

SIPOS [*comes to railing through courtyard*]. Where are the cigars?

ADELE. You put them away.

SIPOS [*coming center*]. I brought them all out.

ADELE. Then they're all smoked.

SIPOS. Janitor, run to the cigar store and bring a box of Britannica for His Reverence, for the Captain, and the District Deputy. Six for a

krone will do for the others. Have you money with you?

JANITOR [*right of center*]. Yes, sir.

ADELE [*at table left*]. Does he have to go now— You don't give them any chance to eat.

JANITOR. It's all right, Miss Adele, you don't get married every day. I'll eat when I get back.

[ADELE crosses to table right.

JANITOR runs out through door right, then later returns to courtyard with the cigars.]

SIPOS [*crosses to ADELE at table right*]. And you, don't fuss around here, come back to the guests. Talk a little with the Parish Priest. You don't have to be attending to things to-day— Why can't I get your mother to talk to Captain Gal?

ADELE [*at table right*]. Because he's always talking about the sea to her.

SIPOS. Well, what do you expect the captain of a ferryboat to talk about?

ADELE. Yes, but mother can't stand it. Once she went to Trieste by boat and she got sick and ever since then she gets dizzy if anybody praises the ocean before her.

[*From table, Miss VIOLA, bridesmaid, comes forward.*]

VIOLA. Aunt Adele, this won't do. Don't work to-day, to-day you're a bride.

[*Takes plates from her.*]

ADELE. Never mind even if I am—

[*Crosses to exit at left.*]

VIOLA. Go ahead, ask Bandi Szasz to play on his violin. He makes us keep on begging him.

SIPOS. Well, Adele, come back to

the table. I'm going to ask Bandi Szasz to play the violin.

[ADELE starts back; she reaches the kitchen door, then:]

COOK [*on the threshold*]. Ma'am, for God's sake, please give me the key, there's no lump sugar.

SIPOS. Give it to her, or she'll go crazy!

ADELE. She won't get that key even at my funeral.

[*Runs into kitchen. SIPOS goes back to guests.*]

VIOLA [*crosses to table left*]. What a good housewife.

IRMA [*at right of table left*]. Give 'em to me, please.

[*Tries to take dishes from VIOLA.*]

VIOLA [*refuses*]. What's to be done with these?

IRMA. Nothing. Please just give them to me. [*Takes them from her. Puts them back.*] Everybody is so excited.

VIOLA. No wonder. We're having a wedding.

IRMA. That's bad enough.

VIOLA. Why?

IRMA. Never you mind why.

[*Goes to LILLY.*]

VIOLA. Is this beautiful little child yours?

KATI [*enters from kitchen*]. Come here, Johann.

[*Crosses and exits with him to kitchen.*]

IRMA. How could it be mine when it's the janitor's? How can I have a child; I'm only nineteen.

VIOLA. But you're a servant girl.

IRMA. Well?

VIOLA. Servant girls can have children even at sixteen.

IRMA. I never had one.

VIOLA. How old is this one?

IRMA. I don't know. But she's a backward child. Though they do give Lilly beer.

VIOLA. She has such a pretty name.

IRMA. Sure. Why shouldn't she have? I gave it to her. Miss Viola has a pretty name, too.

VIOLA [*crosses center*]. I don't like it. I'd have preferred a simpler name.

IRMA. Viola is simple, too. It reminds one of a smell, like lilac.

VIOLA. Lajos Sipos isn't a pretty name for a man, either.

IRMA. Lajos isn't pretty.

VIOLA. Neither is Paul.

IRMA. My favorite ideal has a beautiful name.

VIOLA. Who is he?

IRMA. The man who writes those beautiful tragedies for the theatre. His Christian name is very common—Shakespeare. But his family name, that's beautiful.

VIOLA. What is it?

IRMA. Repertory. [VIOLA *starts to go center*.] Miss Viola, you were to the church on the arm of Mr. Csaszar?

VIOLA. Yes. Why?

IRMA. I was there last week when they were being betrothed. Even then, Mr. Sipos wanted to beat Miss Adele.

[*Wipes her tears.*]

VIOLA. Are you that sorry for Miss Adele?

IRMA. No, ma'am. I'm sorry for Mr. Sipos.

VIOLA. Why?

IRMA. Well, don't you know that I'm in love with Mr. Sipos? The whole town knows it, that's why I drink to drown my misery.

VIOLA. You drink?

IRMA. I've already had three glasses of whisky and I think I'm drunk.

VIOLA. What?

IRMA. Your father was drunk, too, Miss Viola.

VIOLA. My father gets drunk at every wedding and every funeral and then he cries. Did you weep much?

IRMA. Not so much. To-day I started to cry when I saw Miss Viola on the arm of Mr. Csaszar. Miss Viola, are you in love with Mr. Csaszar?

VIOLA. Oh, yes, very frequently. Mr. Csaszar is so very attractive. And best of all, you know, he is impeccable. Nowadays that's so rare. Mr. Sipos is not so impeccable.

IRMA. No, ma'am, he's peccable! And what is more, he is as romantic as a thoroughbred horse.

VIOLA. But he is already middle-aged.

IRMA. No, ma'am. He is nice and fresh. He never coughs, although in middle age people always cough. And I've never seen him spit, never.

VIOLA. That's a sign of a more intense mental life.

IRMA. Oh, it is very much the sign of it.

VIOLA. I don't understand how any one can love him.

IRMA. Now, I'm thinking only of the fact that he got married. God knows what is going to become of lonely Irma.

VIOLA. You are an orphan?

IRMA. Yes, ma'am. Illegitimate.

[IRMA *begins to cry*.]

VIOLA. What is the matter?

IRMA. I've got a pain in my heart like a toothache in my left breast. I nearly fainted in church, but I am

calmer now because I know what is going to take place here to-day.

VIOLA. What is going to take place here to-day?

IRMA. There is going to be a great big scandal here to-day.

VIOLA. What?

IRMA. Yes, ma'am. I'm going to make it. I'm going to drink another glass of whisky, and that'll make me dizzy and then I'll turn the whole world upside down.

VIOLA. Is it as bad as that? [IRMA weeps.] There, there don't cry. You've got awfully pretty hair.

IRMA. Mr. Sipos never notices it.

VIOLA. I can see that you adore him.

IRMA. I'm withering on account of him. But now I'm going to go and become a coquette in my misery. Anyway, every one thinks I am one.

VIOLA. Oh, nonsense!

IRMA. You, Miss Viola, also accused me of having a child.

VIOLA. Yes, but coquettes have no children.

IRMA. Why?

VIOLA. A coquette can't bring a child into the world.

IRMA. Why can't she?

VIOLA. Because she doesn't want to.

IRMA. Does it depend on her?

VIOLA. Of course. She simply . . . has nothing to do with men.

IRMA. Then, what does she do?

VIOLA. Goes to the opera.

IRMA. And that's why she has no children?

[VIOLA sees CSASZAR coming.

CSASZAR appears from courtyard.]

CSASZAR [a little drunk]. Dear Viola, we are missing you. Come,

Bandi Szasz is going to play the violin.

VIOLA. It's about time you paid some attention to me.

CSASZAR [enter]. Are you talking to the kitchen princess?

IRMA [left, below table]. Please don't make fun of me.

VIOLA [right of center]. How can you?

CSASZAR. I'm not making fun of her, on my word of honor. But look, Viola, doesn't she look as though she were a born princess even in that servant's dress?

VIOLA. Are you trying to flirt with her?

IRMA. He's not flirting with me, he's just trying to make you jealous, Miss Viola. And he tries to make Miss Adele jealous of you, because he loves her.

CSASZAR. How dare you say things like that!

IRMA. Because there will be a scandal here to-day. I'm going to drink another glass of whisky and then there will be a great big scandal.

CSASZAR. I'll see to it they get you away from here, you brat.

VIOLA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Just a moment ago you were flirting with her. To talk this way to a woman! I despise you.

[With a crushing glance at him, hurries back to table. At the table BANDI starts to play a solo on the violin.]

CSASZAR [crosses to IRMA below table left. Furious]. Say, what are you up to?

IRMA. I have such a pain in my heart that I don't know what I'm up to. Don't tease me.

CSASZAR. Are you drunk?

IRMA. Yes, I'm drunk. You are

drunk, too, because your sweetheart, too, just got married. They've wronged us both—you and me—

CSASZAR. You're getting mighty familiar.

IRMA [*always wilder*]. I'm going to be familiar with everybody to-day. You'll see. Why are you acting the Count around here? You're just a dirty jeweler.

CSASZAR [*threatening*]. What am I?

IRMA. A dirty jeweler. I ought to know—I wash your underwear. You're dirty all right.

CSASZAR. And what are you?

IRMA. I am a born princess.

CSASZAR. Only, by mistake, you were born in the gutter.

IRMA. That's right. But look at my neck. Look at my hands. Look at my ankles. Look at them. This isn't the foot of a servant—I'm sure my father must have been a Count.

ADELE [*enters. Stands near table at left*]. Come, Bandi Szasz is playing. What's going on here?

CSASZAR [*center*]. The princess had some whisky, it made her crazy, and now she is getting dangerous.

ADELE. What! More whisky! [*Nervously.*] To-morrow you'll clear out. I won't stand it any longer. I'd throw you out right now but I don't want a scandal during my wedding.

IRMA. Don't you?

ADELE. No.

IRMA. But I do.

ADELE. What?

CSASZAR. I told you, didn't I?

ADELE. She's been making me nervous ever since this morning. I don't know what's the matter with her— While she was helping me

dress, she acted as though she wanted to bite me on the neck. And on top of it all, now she is drinking whisky.

IRMA [*right of table left. Starts to cry*]. Please let me suffer alone.

CSASZAR. Stop your bawling, when Mr. Szasz is playing.

IRMA. To hell with Mr. Szasz.

ADELE. Look . . . how her eyes are sparkling. She is looking at me like a suspicious cat.

CSASZAR. *Sie ist verliebt in deinen Mann.*

IRMA. I don't understand what you're saying, but if you're telling her that I'm in love with Mr. Sipos, then you're right, even if you are talking German.

ADELE. Go in and bring me a clean handkerchief from the yellow closet.

IRMA. They want to be left alone.

[*Crosses to right.*]

ADELE. What's that you said?

IRMA. I said that you want to be left alone with Mr. Szasz.

[*Exits right.*]

ADELE. Did you hear what she said?

[*Crosses right after IRMA.*]

CSASZAR [*follows ADELE*]. Never mind that now. We haven't a moment's time— Of course we want to be left alone.

ADELE. We don't.

CSASZAR. You know you do. Don't lie. There are tears in your eyes. You love me.

[*BANDI SZASZ starts to play.*]

ADELE. It isn't true.

CSASZAR. I hope you're satisfied now.

ADELE. Now— No! But—I had to do this. Yes, it's awful; but I'll get used to it somehow.

CSASZAR. And I?

ADELE. You'll have to go to live somewhere else.

CSASZAR. You'll come after me.

ADELE. Never!

CSASZAR. Yes, you will, now and then.

ADELE. What are you trying to do to me? [*Tortured.*] Why do you stand there whispering to me?

CSASZAR. Why do you listen to me whispering to you?

ADELE. What do you want?

CSASZAR. I want to love you.

ADELE. You'll never love me, only I will keep on loving you. To-day less, to-morrow more, I don't know, but I'll never see you again.

CSASZAR. Yes, I will.

ADELE. What are you trying to do to me? Have you no conscience?

CSASZAR. What are you trying to do to me? You've got orange blossoms on your head and still there is something in your eyes and you are looking at me as though you wanted to eat me up.

ADELE. You cad, I want to be decent and sensible.

CSASZAR. You should have been sensible when you first put your arms around me. Don't you know what it means to me to give you up? How do you think I am going to stand it?

ADELE [*trembling*]. Aren't you ashamed to talk this way . . . to a bride?

CSASZAR. You are my bride. You could have done with me anything you wanted. You could have twisted me around your little finger. Why did you rush in and spoil things like this?

ADELE. For God's sake, haven't you any pity? Help me. Don't say things like that. Look, my whole

body is trembling even in my wedding dress. [*CSASZAR steps close to her. Frightened.*] What do you want?

CSASZAR [*takes ADELE in his arms*]. You said— You are trembling.

ADELE. What of it? [*Deathly pale, trembling.*] Don't touch me! God, why don't you help your poor servant? What's going to happen if I did this whole thing for nothing? Why did you come here to-day?

CSASZAR. I didn't want to. You made me.

ADELE. Why did I? Why are you here? Why am I wearing this dress? Just look at me, I'm choking. . . . I can't stand it. You've got to go to-morrow.

CSASZAR. I'll go, but I'll leave my address.

ADELE. You cad! [*CSASZAR warmly, sincerely, bravely looks into her eyes. She looks at him with love.*] Tell me . . . why did I do this? . . .

[*They break at the sight of IRMA.*]

IRMA [*comes down from right, down to ADELE*]. Here is the handkerchief.

ADELE [*dazed*]. What do you want?

IRMA. I brought the handkerchief.

ADELE. Oh, yes. All right. [*Takes it.*] What are you staring at?

IRMA. I'm staring at everything.

ADELE [*backing away from IRMA*]. You . . . you . . . have an evil light in your eyes! Go to your room at once.

IRMA. I won't go, and the light in my eyes is good. And in my heart

is a most beautiful light! Why 'are you afraid of me, you pale bride with the orange blossoms on your head?

[*Thunder, distant. Violin stops.*]

ADELE. Go away from here and don't look at me so; I don't like the way you are looking at me.

SIPOS' VOICE. Adele, where are you?

ADELE. In a moment! In a moment!

[*Runs to kitchen.*]

SIPOS. Adele, Adele—where are you?

IRMA [*at left below table*]. Now she ran to the kitchen so that Mr. Sipos shouldn't see that she was whispering here with you.

CSASZAR [*left, very excited*]. Shut up. It's none of your business.

IRMA. I am drunk now. Everything is my business. You've got twelve shirts, but nine have got the buttons off. My heart is breaking.

[*Thunder, distant.*]

SIPOS [*comes forward*]. Where is Adele? I think we ought to move into the dining room, it is going to rain.

CSASZAR [*crosses to center left. Goes down one step*]. I don't think so.

SIPOS. But I felt a few heavy drops on my head, already. Where is Adele?

IRMA [*bravely*]. She ran to the kitchen so that you shouldn't see that she was whispering with Mr. Csaszar.

CSASZAR [*outraged, goes up to SIPOS, who is at center*]. She ought to be locked in her room. She doesn't know what she is saying. She's drunk.

SIPOS. What?

[*Crosses to IRMA.*]

IRMA. Yes, yes, I'm drunk. In my great misery because you got married. It broke my heart.

SIPOS. What did you dare to say about my wife?

IRMA. I didn't want to say it but I couldn't hold it back any more. You darling, dear martyr, please don't be angry now.

CSASZAR. Why do we have to stand for all this?

SIPOS. You just go back to the company. I'll take care of my wife, all right.

CSASZAR. This is a joke. Don't let this excite you.

SIPOS. Just leave that to me, please, do you understand? Leave that to me.

[*Thunder, distant. CSASZAR goes back to table where ADELE later returns from the kitchen.*]

CAPTAIN GAL. Bandi, play something else—

SIPOS [*sternly, to IRMA*]. Do you want me to lock you in your room?

IRMA. Yes, we'll lock ourselves in together. You beautiful, autumn wind.

SIPOS. I will lock you in.

IRMA. Then I'll start to shout and bang and raise hell.

SIPOS. Do you think I'll let a servant interrupt my wedding? Shut up or I'll send for a policeman.

IRMA. If you do, I'll hang myself then.

SIPOS. Isn't there any one who can talk sense to you?

IRMA [*goes to him, puts arms around his neck*]. Yes, some one.

SIPOS. What do you want, after all? Tell me, my child, calmly, what do you want?

IRMA. I want to become your wife to-day.

SIPOS. To-day, of all days.

IRMA. Tell me—when am I going to become yours?

SIPOS. When the rooster cackles.
...

IRMA. Are you making fun of me?

SIPOS. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. No decent girl would act like this.

IRMA [*threatening, breaks away*]. Don't you say that.

SIPOS. No one can do anything with you. Where you belong is out on the street among the bad girls.

IRMA. Why? Because I love you?

SIPOS. A girl who can love so shamelessly, belongs there.

IRMA. How am I to love you, if you don't let me any other way?

SIPOS. I won't let you this way, or any way.

IRMA. Kiss me twice.

SIPOS. Will you be quiet then?

IRMA. Yes. Yes. I drank because of you. Look how beautiful I am, with my eyes all full of tears. Say that I am beautiful just once.

SIPOS. What. Oh, well, come on, come on.

[*Reaches for her.*]

IRMA [*turns away, weeping*]. Don't be so businesslike about it. I'm so poor but so pretty! That's why I'm always bathing. You should have seen me naked, how sky-blue my body was. [*Thunder, distant, till break. Puts arms around SIPOS' neck.*] Kiss me! Kiss me!

SIPOS. Don't talk so much. [*Grabs her. Holds her to him, kisses her with strength.*] Well, will you be quiet now?

IRMA. How many kisses did you give me?

SIPOS. Exactly three.

IRMA. Three. I thought . . . they were all the kisses in the world.

SIPOS [*pushing her away*]. Now go and lie down. Get a good sleep. What were you quarreling about with Csaszar?

IRMA. What do you care?

SIPOS. I don't.

IRMA. But you do care.

SIPOS. Well, why should I care?

IRMA. Why should he rob you of both of us?

SIPOS. What both?

IRMA. He has already taken away Adele. Now you are afraid that he'll take me away, too.

SIPOS [*sternly, angrily*]. What is that about Adele? Tell me. Now you tell me just what you mean. Immediately! You must explain this.

[*Thunder in the distance. Voices from the table.*]

VOICES [*from table*]. Sipos! Sipos!

SIPOS. In a minute!

CSASZAR [*rushes from table off right, returns shouting*]. The gypsies have come. The gypsies have come.

VIOLA [*crosses to door right*]. Come, let's go in and dance.

CSASZAR. No, let's go back to the table for the speeches.

VOICES [*at table*]. Lajos! Sipos! Sipos!

ADELE. Lajos, come!

SIPOS [*to IRMA*]. Speak or I'll break your neck.

VOICES [*from table*]. Sipos! Sipos!

JANITOR [*enters from kitchen with plate*]. Irma, you go to the kitchen and get your dinner.

[*KATI enters with plate. Seats herself with JANITOR at table left.*]

SIPOS [*as he goes back to table*].
Now you'll tell me everything—

IRMA [*crossing to back under window right*]. Yes, I'll tell you everything. Now it will all come out.

[*SIPOS reaches the table amidst shouts and acclamations.*]

JANITOR. Well, at last we're going to get something to eat.

KATI. Yes, and it was about time. Irma, what are you doing?

IRMA. I'm thanking God that Lajos burnt my lips three times.

JANITOR. I think she is—

KATI. A little cracked.

[*Thunder, distant.*]

STETNER. Ladies and gentlemen!

ALL. Hear!

MOTHER. Be quiet, everybody!

VOICES. Let's hear Stetner—

MOTHER. Please.

STETNER. I'll take the liberty of toasting the young couple with a few lines of poetry of my own. Please to give me your attention!

ADELE. Hear!

STETNER [*who has risen to recite his poem*]. Honored guests!

[*The gypsies are heard tuning their instruments in the house.*]

VOICES. Hear! Hear!

STETNER. Ladies and gentlemen!

[*Thunder, distant.*]

MOTHER. Be quiet, everybody. Mr. Stetner is going to recite.

[*COOK and JULCSA with LILLY come from kitchen to rail to listen to STETNER.*]

STETNER. I'll take the liberty of toasting the young couple with a few lines of my own poetry. Please to give me your attention.

[*Thunder, distant. Tuning stops.*]

"The dawn of the day has finally come!

When Lajos and Adele will be one."

[*Thunder near.*]

Be quiet, please, madam, not now, not now.

"The happy young groom has dressed with care

And the beautiful bride has a wreath in her hair."

COOK. She bought it at Suchar and Eisner's.

STETNER.

"May blessing follow you on your way

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday—

LILLY. Friday, Friday, Friday.

JANITOR. That's right, Johann.

STETNER.

"Now you're two as you're standing—sitting here

But don't be three at least for a year."

[*Applause.*]

VOICE. I know what you mean—

[*Thunder, distant. Applause and cheers.*]

KATI. My, but he recited beautiful!

JANITOR. Well, why shouldn't he? He is an undertaker.

CSASZAR. Now let's hear Lajos Sipos.

[*Thunder, distant.*]

FEMALE VOICE. It is going to rain.

[*Cheers and talk.*]

CSASZAR. Quiet, please, everybody. Let's hear Lajos Sipos. Mr. Lajos Sipos.

IRMA [*moves over to porch post, picking up from the table glass of whisky which she takes with her and drinks from*]. Let's hear Lajos Sipos.

SIPOS. My dear friends:

IRMA. Let's hear Sipos.

SIPOS. Before anything else, let me thank my friend, Stetner, for his beautiful poem, with which he toasted us. I thank you. I am not a poet. . . .

IRMA [*shouting*]. Csaszar took away Adele from Sipos!

[*Deadly silence.*]

SIPOS. My dear friends, I am not a poet, so it is in plain prose merely that I reply to my dear friend Stetner.

IRMA [*shouting*]. Csaszar took away Adele from Sipos!

ALL. Ps-s-t!

JANITOR. What is she saying?

KATI. Are you crazy?

SIPOS. In the first place, I say in reply. . . .

IRMA. Csaszar took—

ADELE [*rises*]. Children, it's really going to rain.

SIPOS. I'll be brief, then we can move into the house. This good meal which we received here today. . . .

[ADELE comes up on porch in fear and amazement.]

IRMA [*shouting*]. Adele has a kid in the high school at Szeged. Adele loves Csaszar. Sipos is being cheated! Sipos is being cheated!

[*Commotion, uneasiness at the table.*]

SIPOS [*all very quiet, while he continues*]. My dear friends, for the

good meal which we are having here to-day, we can thank my beloved mother-in-law.

CSASZAR [*has run over to IRMA, struggles, shouts at her in muffled voice*]. What are you hollering here? Will you hold your tongue? I'll kill you, I'll murder you!

JANITOR [*follows CSASZAR, pulls him away, right*]. For God's sake, what's going on here? Don't touch her! [*Stands between them.*] Why are you doing this?

[*Guests crowd about steps in amazement.*]

IRMA [*having completely lost control of herself, almost inspired, shrilly*]. I am not afraid of anybody. I won't let them cheat Lajos Sipos— On May twentieth Adele went into Csaszar's room at four o'clock in the afternoon in a kimono to make love to him and she stayed with him until four o'clock in the morning.

KATI. Are you crazy? Are you crazy?

IRMA. I swear by God on my happiness.

[*Growing commotion among guests.*]

COOK. What is she saying?

KATI. She is crazy.

IRMA. She was in a green silk kimono, that's how happy she was. She was in a green silk kimono!

[CSASZAR breaks from JANITOR and tries to silence her. LILLY rushes across and beats CSASZAR as the JANITOR drags him to the right again. KATI pushes after LILLY, who is crying.]

KATI. My God, Johann! Come here, Johann.

IRMA. I won't let them cheat Lajos Sipos. On June fourth, please, every-

body, on a Thursday, the bride slept with Csaszar all night. [*Voices and commotion.*] Cut me into pieces, I'll hang myself, but I won't let them cheat Lajos Sipos.

[*Crash of thunder, and wind and rain as storm breaks.*]

ADELE. Go into the house, it is raining. She is crazy. Go in. She is drunk. Go into the house, everybody.

[*Glowers threateningly at IRMA as she follows the fleeing guests into the house. Thunder crash stops as SIPOS speaks.*]

SIPOS [*comes onto porch center from wedding table. IRMA crosses toward table left. Goes up to IRMA*]. Now what shall I do to you? Kill you?

IRMA [*with dignity, loud, with choked-down tears in her voice*]. I cannot be hurt now, because— I am already saying good-bye to all of you. Farewell, my dearest, only love.

SIPOS. Why did you do this? Why did you do this!!!!

IRMA. I am the bride of death, and to-morrow is my wedding. . . . I am going to hang myself then. I want to die.

SIPOS. Now you tell me everything.

IRMA. I won't talk.

SIPOS. You will or I'll— Tell me everything you know, or—I'll kill you!

[*Rain and wind die down a little.*]

ADELE [*comes from right. Waltz starts off stage right*]. What's happening here?

IRMA. Mr. Sipos is killing me.

ADELE. He won't kill you.

SIPOS. I . . . I'll kill you, too.

ADELE [*masking her excitement, with shrill determination all through*]. What are you talking about, you fool?

SIPOS. I'll kill her and then clear out. . . .

[*Thunder.*]

ADELE. First there's something else you've got to do.

SIPOS [*left*]. I—

ADELE. Not a word. Don't be afraid. I'm not trying to wash myself clean. I'm taking things into my hands now. [*Csaszar enters.*] What do you want?

CSASZAR. I came back because I didn't want them to say that I had run away. Tell me what to do and I'll clear out.

ADELE [*center*]. None of you will clear out. If I lose my head now I am done for in this neighborhood. You go back and dance, do you understand?

CSASZAR. What?

ADELE. As far as we are concerned everything is over. Do as I tell you. Go in and dance.

CSASZAR. I am at your disposal.

[*Csaszar exits right. Thunder in distance.*]

ADELE. And, now, we two.

SIPOS. What about this girl?

ADELE. She can hardly do any more damage than she's done already. Now you listen to me.

SIPOS. Why should I listen to you!

ADELE. Because I am stronger than you are. I told you I was not marrying you out of love but for medicine against my love. Everything else is the hysterical shouting of a drunken child. But I won't even deny it.

SIPOS. You are being frank now,

because you are trying to get me back.

ADELE. Think what you want. To-day everybody is here for whose opinion I care. They haven't come here for morals or justice.

SIPOS. I am going.

ADELE. You will go, but not until to-morrow. I'll not be a bride forsaken on her wedding night. Now I'll go in to my guests and sing with them and dance with them.

SIPOS. You are capable of doing that.

ADELE. Yes, and what is more, you will be capable of it, too. Now the gypsies are playing a waltz. I'll have a dance with Csaszar and then I'll tell them to play a czardas. Then you'll come in and take me in your arms and dance the czardas with me.

SIPOS. The czardas? I'd like to understand.

ADELE. With that dance, we'll be even. You can leave me. I was the mistress of a Count and I'll pay like a Countess. With one czardas I'll give you back your honor.

SIPOS. I'll do what you ask of me. Just to show you that I'm not afraid you will win me back.

ADELE. When you hear that czardas you will come in and dance with me and look into my eyes and kiss me. Then we are even.

[*Thunder, distant. ADELE exits right.*]

SIPOS. Well, now the dream has come true. The aviator fell into the water.

IRMA. Please don't go in to her.

SIPOS. What else shall I do?

IRMA. Please kill me.

[*Goes to him.*]

SIPOS. Don't you see what you've done? Get away from here.

[*Thunder, distant.*]

IRMA. I'd ruin myself on your account, young as I am. Take my life. Don't go back to her.

SIPOS. Who are you to interfere with my life?

IRMA. I am in love with you.

SIPOS. This is not love. You are a sensual child. But you are crazy, shameless. If you keep on like this, you'll end up in a very ugly place.

IRMA. Don't keep on saying that or I will go there.

SIPOS. If you go there, you belong there.

IRMA [*feverish*]. I belong to you. Don't say that you don't care for me. Now you are free.

SIPOS. What are you trying to do to me?

IRMA [*feverishly, with exaltation*]. I am clean as an angel. I am as clean as my soul!

SIPOS. Be quiet, you idiot. Let go of my arm. Take your head away, you abandoned thing, you.

[*Thunder, distant.*]

IRMA. Don't say that. Take me in to dance. I love you. [*Music stops.*] They've cheated you and they're laughing at you. You know I love you, because no one else loves you, only me. [*Strains against his chest.*] I wish I could die right now on your strong bosom.

[*Loudly the czardas is heard.*]

SIPOS [*draws away from IRMA*]. The czardas. . .

IRMA. Don't go in. She will win you back. Don't go in. She is foxier than we are. I'll die if you do.

SIPOS [*goes toward door, hesitates*]. Shouldn't I go in?

[*The door opens, ADELE steps to threshold. Door remains open, the music is heard, and voices singing.*]

ADELE. The czardas. Can't you hear it?

SIPOS [*undetermined*]. Yes. . . .

[*They approach each other.*]

ADELE [*takes SIPOS's arm; the two of them slowly start into the room from which the music is heard. With lifted head, she says with animation*]. Lift your head, Sipsos.

[*Thunder, distant. Voices again. Laughter. They go in, the door closes. IRMA makes a few steps after them, looks in win-*

dow right, listens to the wild czardas, then cries softly.]

IRMA. Farewell! Dearest, angry one. Farewell! [*Thunder, distant. IRMA runs across verandah, runs to courtyard, soft thunder all through. Into that she cries her broken-hearted:*] Now I must die! Now I must die— [*Runs across courtyard, rushes out center. As though she were running on the street in the storm; in the continuous muffled thunder, her broken cries can be heard, always from a greater distance.*] Farewell! Farewell!

CURTAIN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
B.

ACT THREE

[*SCENE: Waiting room at the district police station in an old-fashioned house on the outskirts of the town. Long, whitewashed office room, with two windows and a door in the back. All these open into a little yard. A door, front left, leading to the police head's office. At the left, below the left window, a desk. Above it, a filing cabinet. Another desk at right. Above it the Chief of Police's picture. Below this, an official chart. A few chairs. In the back, next to the back wall, facing the audience, two long wooden benches, for those having business in the place. Five places on each bench.*]

TIME: The next morning.

AT RISE: The CLERK is seated at the left desk working. At the left of the desk is seated a well-built old policeman. In the back, seated on the bench, are, in this order: SIPOS, on the left edge, still wearing the suit he wore yesterday, a suitcase next to him on the floor, and on this, his

overcoat and hat; next to him, a few empty spaces; then comes ADELE, already rested and in a changed dress— she is at some distance from SIPOS. On the rear bench behind SIPOS sits KATI at the end and the JANITOR next to her. Very long pause. The CLERK and SERGEANT are indifferent, ADELE is gazing before her, and the JANITOR and his wife are frightened. SIPOS is restless. Silence.]

SIPOS [*to the CLERK, with a note in his hand*]. Please, couldn't you possibly tell me why we have been summoned?

CLERK. No.

SIPOS. I haven't the least idea what they want, and we've been sitting here for more than a half hour. We were summoned here for ten o'clock and it is already ten-thirty.

CLERK. I am sorry, very sorry, but what do you expect me to do about it—

[SERGEANT goes to desk right when entering.]

SIPOS. Can't I go in to the Magistrate?

SERGEANT. No.

SIPOS. Why can't I go in?

SERGEANT. Because you can't.

SIPOS. That's different. Thank you.

[Goes back to his place on bench at left.]

KATI. Yes, but I don't know what it is all about.

JANITOR. I don't know what it is all about.

SIPOS [turning again to SERGEANT]. Yes, but—

SERGEANT. There is a case before the magistrate. Please wait your turn patiently.

SIPOS. We thank you very much. [Going up to KATI and JANITOR on rear bench. Looks at slip.] I can't imagine what they want of us. "At ten o'clock" and here written in blue pencil is "urgent."

JANITOR. Yes, we got the same. God knows what it is all about. It is urgent enough for us but it doesn't seem so to them.

SIPOS. That's right. It can't be for anything except for that gypsy music. How long did they keep on playing?

JANITOR. Till seven in the morning.

SIPOS. That's funny, I fell asleep on the verandah after midnight. I didn't even hear it.

JANITOR. You slept till seven-thirty with your head on the table.

SIPOS. Still, I did hear in a sort of half dream that Stetner kept it up for a long time.

JANITOR. He howled till five in the morning.

SIPOS. Howled?

JANITOR. Like a dog, if you please. He was reciting his poem.

[Pause.]

KATI. Yes, and it was beautiful.

SIPOS. Perhaps he howled too loud.

JANITOR. Something terrible. At five in the morning we threw some ice water on him, then he became quiet and went home.

SIPOS. Undoubtedly, the neighbors made a complaint about disturbing the peace at night.

KATI. What kind of peace could we be disturbing when it kept on thundering as though the sky would break?

[The glass door opens, in comes

MRS. ROTICS and COMPANION.

MRS. ROTICS is wearing a very expensive black silk morning dress.]

MRS. ROTICS [gives slip to SERGEANT]. Please, I have been summoned.

SERGEANT [looks at slip]. Ten o'clock. Sit in back there with the ten o'clock ones.

[They do so, on the right end of rear bench.]

SIPOS. Is she a ten o'clock one also? With us?

JANITOR. Seems that way.

SIPOS. Was she at the wedding?

JANITOR. I am not sure, I didn't see her.

SIPOS. Who is she?

JANITOR. I don't know. [To ADELE.] Maybe she is one of the neighbors who made the complaint.

SIPOS. Such fine people don't live in our neighborhood.

JANITOR. She must be a Princess.

[Pause. SIPOS rises, goes to CLERK at desk left, and starts

to whisper to him. ADELE follows.]

ADELE. I'd like to know what you've decided to do. [SIPOS *doesn't answer. A look from SIPOS.*] I'm asking, what you've decided to do?

SIPOS [*without looking into her eyes*]. This will answer instead of me.

ADELE. In other words, you are going away.

SIPOS. Yes, I'm going away.

ADELE. Where?

SIPOS. That I don't know yet, but never back to you!

ADELE. I am prepared for everything, but I should like to know just where I stand. So you're going away.

SIPOS. Yes.

ADELE. Forever?

SIPOS. We won't talk about this any more.

ADELE. Very well, we'll let it go at that. But how about your laundry?

SIPOS. It is in my trunk on the top.

ADELE. And your suits?

SIPOS. There, too. To-night I'll send some one for it from the shop.

ADELE. What have you got in the valise?

SIPOS. The things I need every day.

ADELE. Comb, brush?

SIPOS. Yes.

ADELE. Tooth brush? Soap?

SIPOS. Yes.

ADELE. Aspirin?

SIPOS. Everything.

ADELE. Slippers?

SIPOS. Damn it, I forgot.

ADELE. I'll send them.

SIPOS. Thank you.

[*Pause. The glass door opens,*

CSASZAR *steps in very excitedly,*

rushes to ADELE center. SIPOS sits down.]

CSASZAR. Adele, I've just heard . . . that you are here. What's the matter?

[*No one answers.*]

SERGEANT [*crosses to CSASZAR, center*]. Your summons, please.

CSASZAR. I haven't any summons. I am a friend.

SERGEANT. What is it you wish?

CSASZAR [*waving the SERGEANT away*]. Just a minute, please. For God's sake, Adele, what are you doing in a police station?

ADELE. We don't know why we've been summoned here. Some one complained that we made too much noise at the wedding.

CSASZAR. Nonsense. It doesn't matter what they want from you. I'll stay here. I am a witness—

[*Turning insolently to the SERGEANT.*]

SERGEANT. What can we do for you?

CSASZAR. I am a witness.

SERGEANT. Then stay there with the others.

[*Turns back to his work at desk.*]

CSASZAR [*seating himself on the bench near ADELE*]. Julcsa told me that you had all been sent to jail.

KATI. What is going to become of Johann—

[*Audibly weeping.*]

CSASZAR [*indicating Mrs. ROTICS*]. Who are these people?

ADELE. We don't know, maybe the ones who complained against us.

[*Pause.*]

CSASZAR [*to Mrs. ROTICS*]. I beg your pardon, to whom have I the pleasure of speaking?

Mrs. ROTICS. I am Mrs. Rotics.

CSASZAR. I beg your pardon, I am sorry but—

MRS. ROTICS. I don't know you. May I ask who you are?

CSASZAR. Certainly, I am Pal Csaszar.

MRS. ROTICS [*haughtily*]. Well?

CSASZAR. May I ask why you are here?

MRS. ROTICS. I can't see what difference that makes to you.

CSASZAR. Thank you very much.

MRS. ROTICS. You are welcome.

[CSASZAR returns to his place as the door opens. ILONA steps in with a summons which she presents to the SERGEANT.]

SERGEANT [*looking at slip*]. Ilona Keczei?

ILONA. Yes.

SERGEANT. Girl under police control?

ILONA. Yes, please.

SERGEANT. You are one of the ten o'clock group.

CSASZAR. Well, what . . . ?

KATI. Oh, but I don't see— what? . . .

JANITOR. Be quiet, I am here.

SERGEANT. Sit there with the others.

SIPOS. Is she one of the ten o'clockers? Well, now I am mixed up.

[ILONA is confusedly standing stage center.]

SERGEANT. Why don't you sit down?

ILONA. Thank you, I'd rather stand.

[*Very modestly, takes up a position next to left end of bench.*

KATI draws away from her. All the others shift toward the left, even ADELE.]

SIPOS. Well, now. Well, I'll be

damned if I know what this is all about— [*Gets up. Very sternly.*] I beg your pardon, but now I really must ask just what you want of us and why we're being mixed up with people like this?

[*Here his words stop, for the left door, which leads to the MAGISTRATE, opens and out steps IRMA. IRMA is wearing an orange-colored, most modern ball dress of extreme cut, full of glittering, golden beads. The dress is wrinkled, worn, dirty. On her hair, a scintillating head-band. Orange stockings, dirty white ball-room slippers. One of her stockings is hanging. IRMA, broken, tired with weeping, goes through the room, not noticing any one, sinks to chair, which is standing next to SERGEANT's desk, buries her face and weeps bitterly.*]

KATI. Irma!

SIPOS [*who has quietly followed her with his eyes until now*]. Irma! [*IRMA sobs out instead of replying.*] Irma! For God's sake what are you doing here? [*IRMA sobbing.*] I know I was drunk last night. I must still be asleep and dreaming.

[*Feels himself. Every one looks at IRMA with surprise.*]

JANITOR. She ain't a dream. She is Irma.

ADELE. Irma!

[*IRMA still weeps.*]

SIPOS. I want to see the Magistrate at once or I'll bust up the joint.

SERGEANT. This is no joint. This is the police station.

SIPOS. I want to see the management. Where is the manager here?

[*Starts.*]

SERGEANT. His Honor is in there. You can't go in because the police doctor is in there. Get back to your place.

KATI. Oh, my God. Did you hear what he said. The police doctor.

[Weeping.]

JANITOR. Don't cry; I am here.

KATI. Yes, but he said the police doctor?

SIPOS [by this time has returned dazed to his place. To KATI]. Yes, I know— [To the SERGEANT.] Is the police doctor one of the ten o'clockers?

CLERK. Yes. He is the complainant.

SIPOS. What did he complain of?

CLERK. Mrs. Rotics.

MRS. ROTICS. Sir?

SIPOS. What Mrs. Rotics?

CLERK. That Mrs. Rotics, alleged owner of a house of prostitution.

SIPOS [grins bitterly]. Now I know I am asleep.

[Enter SERGEANT-AT-ARMS.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS [with a slip in his hand]. Mrs. Lajos Sipos!

ADELE [stands up]. I am she.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. This way, please.

[ADELE goes off left. SERGEANT-AT-ARMS follows her. Door closes. As ADELE goes out, the MAGISTRATE and DOCTOR enter.]

DOCTOR. Don't trouble, thank you very much. See you again.

MAGISTRATE. I thank you. Good-bye, Doctor. And thank you so much for letting me know about this case. Don't be afraid, we'll take care of the matter. What are you going to do to-night?

DOCTOR. Well, Margit and her

people came from Sseged. After supper, we'll go to Morbitzer's to listen to the gypsies. Won't you come also?

MAGISTRATE. I'd love to, but you know how Lena is.

DOCTOR. I should certainly like to see you there. Good-bye.

MAGISTRATE. Good-bye. We'll come if possible. Give my regards to Hermin and Margit. My regards to Vilma, Elizabeth and Pirooska.

DOCTOR. My best to Lena.

MAGISTRATE. Thank you, I'll tell her— Good-bye.

DOCTOR. Good-bye. [Turns to go, recognizes MRS. ROTICS.] Good morning, Mrs. Rotics.

MRS. ROTICS. Good morning, Doctor.

[DOCTOR hurries off toward yard. As MAGISTRATE starts back, SIPOS steps before him.]

SIPOS. I beg your pardon. I have the honor to introduce myself, I am Lajos Sipos.

MAGISTRATE. Are you? What do you wish?

SIPOS. They say that the police doctor is the complainant; we've been sitting here, and we're all worried. What is it all about, sir?

MAGISTRATE. Yes, he is the complainant. Have you, perhaps, any objections to it?

SIPOS. Oh, no, sir, but we don't know why we've been summoned here.

MAGISTRATE. Sergeant, what is this awful smell here? As we are not in a drug store—

[IRMA sobs loudly. SERGEANT rises.]

SERGEANT. I have the honor to report that I do not know, but some

one has too much cologne on. I can hardly stand it myself.

MAGISTRATE [*to* MRS. ROTICS]. I'm sure you're the one with the perfume, madame, but, you'll get all the perfume you want, *for what you did to this girl*.

MRS. ROTICS. Your Honor, my two eyes should pop out of my head, if I as much as talked to the girl.

MAGISTRATE. Shut up.

JANITOR. It seems she's no lady after all.

MAGISTRATE [*to* SIPOS]. Lajos Sipos?

SIPOS. Yes, sir.

MAGISTRATE. Is that your wife who just went in?

SIPOS. She's my wife. For the time being.

MAGISTRATE [*below desk right*]. And you still don't know what it is all about?

SIPOS. No, sir.

MAGISTRATE. That girl here, was she in your employ?

SIPOS. Yes, sir.

MAGISTRATE. Very well. Sit down.

SIPOS. But we don't know what it is all about.

MAGISTRATE. Well, you don't, eh? This morning, Dr. Theodore Sagody, in his capacity as police physician, inspected all the so-called houses of ill-fame in this district. At eight o'clock this morning, in one of them, which is the property of Mrs. Rotics—he found—

KATI. Oh—oh—

CSASZAR. Shut up.

MAGISTRATE. Your servant girl, Irma Szabo, in that dress as you see her there, at the moment when Mrs. Rotics wanted to engage her as an apprentice in her establishment.

MRS. ROTICS. I beg your pardon. . . .

MAGISTRATE. Sit down! [MRS. ROTICS *sits back in her place*.] Sergeant, ventilate the place, this stench is giving me a headache.

SERGEANT. Yes, sir.

[*Crosses to left, opens window*.]

MAGISTRATE. You must have instructed the girl pretty well, because this lady in her ball dress was most energetically trying to save you. She said just as they always do on such occasions, that she went to your place of her own volition. She wanted to take up that terrible life because of disappointment in love. The doctor called a policeman and brought her here.

SIPOS. I understand now.

MAGISTRATE. Well, what's the matter?

SIPOS. This is terrible.

MAGISTRATE. Not so very terrible.

SIPOS. No?

MAGISTRATE. The girl was desperate. She kept on talking wildly. She lied to me that she has a child by the name of Lilly.

IRMA [*sobs out*]. Lilly!

KATI. Please, sir— [*Standing up*.] That's my child. She gave it the name Lilly. She is lying.

SERGEANT. Sit down.

MAGISTRATE. Sit down! And she also said that she spent a whole night with a hussar.

KATI. That's my child, too, sir.

MAGISTRATE. What? You mean to say you have a son who is old enough to be a soldier.

KATI. No, sir. That's Lilly.

MAGISTRATE. Lilly—the hussar? are you crazy?

KATI. No, sir. I ain't crazy. It's the same child, sir. He was just

dressed as a hussar for the wedding. He's too young to be spending nights with girls.

MAGISTRATE. How old is he?

KATI. Five years old.

MAGISTRATE. That really is too young. I was immediately suspicious of her self-accusations. Youthful hysteria. That's the reason why I've made a special case of her.

KATI. But good God, what has happened?

JANITOR. Just wait, we'll find out.

SIPOS. Sir, this is terrible.

MAGISTRATE. It really is terrible that the people for whom she was working didn't take better care of her. Now His Honor is going to find out if what the girl testified to is true. That she was in love with a designer or something and that he tortured her to death so that in her desperation she went to that house of ill-fame.

MRS. ROTICS [*rising*]. I beg your pardon.

MAGISTRATE. What did I tell you a moment ago?

MRS. ROTICS. You said "Shut up."

MAGISTRATE. It was a good idea—keep on doing it. [MRS. ROTICS *sits down*.] Now His Honor will determine whether it is true that this poor girl was forced into an evil life by some dirty scoundrel. And then we'll get an affidavit from him.

SIPOS. Yes, sir, he deserves it.

MAGISTRATE [*toward IRMA*]. And Irma Szabo we'll fix you, also. Then you'll name him quick enough.

MAGISTRATE [*to MRS. ROTICS, who stands up*]. Well, well? What is the matter with you? What do you want?

MRS. ROTICS. May I talk?

MAGISTRATE. You may.

MRS. ROTICS. Very well. I beg a million pardons, but you said that I have a house of ill-fame.

[*Crosses to MAGISTRATE near desk, right.*]

MAGISTRATE. Well, what kind of a house is it—?

MRS. ROTICS. Excuse me, but everybody in Budapest will tell you how good my house is.

MAGISTRATE. Good. I'll make a note of it.

MRS. ROTICS. I shouldn't be treated the same as these people. Even the police know that my place is most correctly organized, that I'm famous for my kind treatment of the girls, that I treat them as though I were their mother. Why, I have girls in my house who have been there thirty-five years.

MAGISTRATE. Bravo!

MRS. ROTICS. Mine is the leading institution in Budapest. There isn't another one in the world like it.

MAGISTRATE. The way you praise it, Mrs. Rotics, it seems to be your idea that we should send our daughters to your institution for their higher education.

MRS. ROTICS. No, sir. I'm not suggesting that.

MAGISTRATE. Thank God!

MRS. ROTICS. I'm only saying all this because in a place like mine—it's impossible that anything should happen like the doctor reported—

MAGISTRATE. Why impossible?

MRS. ROTICS. I am not a procuress. I know that that is punishable. You don't think that I am such a fool as that, do you? That girl rang my bell at eight o'clock this morning, like a crazy fool in that dress she now has on and with that disgusting perfume on her, and she asked me

what time we open up for business. I said, "What do you mean what time do we open up? We've just closed." It was eight o'clock in the morning. Well, she said she wanted to become a bad woman and then she started to cry. That attracted the doctor's attention—

MAGISTRATE. Are you through?

MRS. ROTICS. Yes.

[*She goes back to her seat on bench.*]

MAGISTRATE. Well, sit down. Tell me, Mrs. Rotics, why are you in mourning?

MRS. ROTICS. Because my husband's death—

MAGISTRATE. That's too bad. When did he die?

MRS. ROTICS. Twenty years ago.

MAGISTRATE. And you've been mourning him ever since?

MRS. ROTICS. Yes, sir. I am forced to wear mourning because otherwise I can't get any respect.

MAGISTRATE. From whom?

MRS. ROTICS. From my clients and everybody.

MAGISTRATE. Oh—then respect means a good deal to you, does it?

MRS. ROTICS. Indeed it does. I'll have you understand I am one of the highest tax payers in Budapest.

MAGISTRATE. Naturally.

MRS. ROTICS. My life is an open book, sir. I read all the latest novels. I am a subscriber to all the highest class magazines, and what is more, I get an electric massage every day.

MAGISTRATE. Clerk, make a note of it.

MRS. ROTICS. The police doctor is persecuting me.

COMPANION. *Soyez calme, soyez calme.*

MAGISTRATE. Well, now, don't cry,

my pretty child. After all, we're human. If it is true what you are saying, we won't bite your head off.

MRS. ROTICS. Well, all I say is, whoever bites off my head, gets a mouthful.

MAGISTRATE [*waves his hand. Left door opens and ADELE enters*]. Did they read the girl's confession to you?

ADELE. Yes, sir.

MAGISTRATE. All right, send the next one in.

[*Goes off left.*]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. Mrs. Rotics. This way, please.

MRS. ROTICS. Present.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. This way, please.

[*MRS. ROTICS and SERGEANT-AT-ARMS go out and ADELE returns to her place.*]

SIPOS. What did they want from you?

ADELE. Your crazy lady friend tried to get into a house of prostitution.

SIPOS. I've heard that before.

CSASZAR. Horrible.

ADELE. She said that she went there because you sent her there.

SIPOS. I?

[*IRMA breaks out sobbing broken-heartedly.*]

CSASZAR. Horrible.

ADELE. They are holding me responsible because she was in my employ.

CSASZAR. Terrible. But what is this all about? How did she get that into her head?

ADELE. They've read her confession to me. She is deeply in love with Lajos Sipos, furniture designer. Lajos Sipos, furniture designer, spurned her love. That made her

desperate. Then Mr. Lajos Sipos held out hope to her.

SIPOS. I?

ADELE [*without looking at SIPOS*]. Mr. Lajos Sipos kissed her three times with passion while he was getting married. [*IRMA sobs again.*] But then the fickle Mr. Sipos elegantly pushed her away from him saying that she was too sensual. Later, he started a jealous scene with the lady.

SIPOS. I?

ADELE [*without looking at him*]. He accused her of carrying on an affair with Pal Csaszar, jeweler.

CSASZAR. With me?

ADELE. I'm just repeating what they read to me. Then Mr. Sipos alternately kissed and thrust away the lady from him and he kept on repeating this until the desperation of the lady reached its climax. Then Mr. Sipos assured her that if that was what she was after she knew where to find it and encouraged her to choose that as a profession.

SIPOS. I encouraged her? That's a lie!

ADELE. Then, after having repeated this paternal advice several times and with emphasis, the girl ran away from him in her desperation. She had some money in her trunk. She took that and went to the Nivana Café.

CSASZAR. Why?

ADELE. To enter the profession recommended to her by Mr. Sipos. In the café she got acquainted with a girl who was already a member of the profession. And the girl did her out of her money.

IRMA [*cries out*]. That's not true.

ILONA [*excited*]. Please, that isn't true, and that lady is right. I am

that girl. I didn't do her out of her ten kronen.

ADELE. Well, who did?

ILONA. She was all wet when she came into the café, because I couldn't be on the street on account of the rain. Uh-huh, and we got acquainted and she told me her story, just as you tell it now. And I told her the story of my life—it was something like her own. Only the man in my case was a druggist with gallstones at Misholz— Uh-huh! Then she told me that she needed a different kind of dress, because she couldn't start in business in the one she had on. I told her that I have an orange crêpe dress with beads, which I'm not wearing—I told her it wasn't much but it was all right for a beginner, and then I said I'd give it to her for nothing. But she insisted that I take the money, so I sold her the dress. And for the ten Czecho-Slovak kronen I gave her an elegant head ornament, which is worth at least twenty kronen—I'd like to know where you can get it for less!

CSASZAR. Well?

ILONA. Then she came to my room—I dressed her up and made up her face,—she paid me the money and we went to the Nivana Café.

ADELE. And there you got her drunk.

ILONA. She got me drunk, ma'am, because I can't stand drink, and we kept on drinking stomach-bitters because I have a weak stomach, and she kept on getting more and more sober and I kept on getting more and more—uh-huh—till I could hardly hold up my head, when the head waiter wanted to take her home. I called the head waiter into the telephone booth, there I gave him a piece of

my mind and slapped his face twice, and out of pure kindness I went home with the head waiter.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. Andrew Popovics! Mrs. Andrew Popovics! This way.

[JANITOR and KATI stand up.]

SIPOS. I never knew that your name was Popovics—

JANITOR. Well it is.

SIPOS. I didn't know.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. Go in, please.

[KATI and the JANITOR go in and Mrs. ROTICS comes out. To Mrs. ROTICS.] Go back to your place.

ADELE. Csaszar, please go home.

CSASZAR. Why?

ADELE. You're not needed here any more.

CSASZAR. As long as you stay here, I'll stay here, too.

ADELE. Go home.

CSASZAR. Home, where?

ADELE. Home!

CSASZAR. Well, you don't want me to leave?

ADELE. No!

CSASZAR. All right. [Stands up.] In that case, I won't go to work to-day, I'll wait for you at home.

ADELE. God ordained it so. He's punished me because I tried to be too smart. One mustn't try to be smarter than He is. I've had hard luck. Smart people are those who have luck. Go home and wait for me till I return, and when I come home, wait till I get old. And when I get old, leave me. And then I'll go to God personally to ask him why he does not let people remain decent in this rotten world.

CSASZAR. I am at your disposal, Mrs. Sipo—

[CSASZAR kisses her hand and

goes through glass door. IRMA sobs aloud.]

ADELE. Why are you crying?

[Enter MAGISTRATE.]

IRMA [weeping]. Because he's going to get Mr. Sipo's room now.

COMPANION [in a low voice]. *Soyez calme, soyez calme. Bienôt, ma chère.*

MAGISTRATE. What are you two whispering about there?

MRS. ROTICS. *Rien.*

MAGISTRATE. Witnesses shouldn't be whispering. Don't think that I don't understand you because you are speaking French. I was a month in Paris.

[Left door opens. SIPOS, JANITOR and KATI come out. SIPOS sits down.]

JANITOR [to ADELE]. What are we to do now, madam?

ADELE. Are the police through with you?

KATI. Yes, ma'am, but if you need us . . .

ADELE. I need no one in this world. Go home and put things to rights. Tell the glazier to fix the mirror which Stetner broke. Tell him to take the bill to Stetner. Clean out Mr. Sipo's room, and close it, and—give my mother a quart of coffee with milk. You may go.

JANITOR }
KATI } Certainly, madam.

[They go out.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS [comes in from left]. Mrs. Lajos Sipo. You may go now—

[ADELE gets up. Mrs. ROTICS gets up.]

MRS. ROTICS. And I, sir?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. You may go also—

MRS. ROTICS. You see. *Voilà.*

. . . *Bon jour . . . Bon jour, monsieur.*

[*She exits with companion.*]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. Ilona Keczeli.

ILONA. Yes, sir.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. This way, please. [*ILONA exits into courtroom.*]

Are you Lajos Sipos—

SIPOS [*rising*]. I am.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. You may go.

SIPOS. Must I go?

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. No, you don't have to go.

SIPOS. Then I'll stay a while.

[*Sits again at the end of bench.*]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. Ilona Keczeli!

[*ILONA enters left. SERGEANT-AT-ARMS goes after her. IRMA draws away from Sipos.*]

ADELE [*who is standing*]. Have you anything to say to me?

SIPOS. No.

ADELE. Are you willing to admit that I have decided my own fate?

SIPOS. Of course.

ADELE. Aren't you curious to know what I have decided?

SIPOS. No!

ADELE. Well, let it go at that. It will make it easier for you, too. There are still plenty of lawyers.

SIPOS. It wouldn't do to have them die out.

ADELE [*starts for door and stops right of upper bench*]. Is this the way we part after ten years?

SIPOS [*rising*]. This is the way. I'm not a drummer who forgives his wife every time he comes back from a trip. I am a carpenter. And I don't forgive even once.

ADELE. That is really the only thing that I can still respect in you, but I didn't ask for your pardon.

SIPOS. And that's what I respect in you. I mayn't have an automobile,

but I have honor. You did your best to break my heart—but I suppose it will stay that way.

ADELE. And you can say that without crying?

SIPOS. Well, workmen haven't time to cry.

ADELE. Who's going to keep your things in order?

[*Pause.*]

IRMA. I . . .

ADELE. Ah . . . so. [*Pause.*] Well, all right, Sipos. We'll have peace at last—both of us. Adele Romajzer will bloom once more, will get young again, paint her face, laugh and cry, suffer and rejoice. She'll love and be loved and then when all her money is gone, she will die. The trouble with me was I thought too much about respectability; admit that at least.

[*Starts to go.*]

SIPOS. I won't see you again but I'll think about you now and then.

ADELE. I know you will, but I won't think much about you.

SIPOS. Good-bye.

[*ADELE starts out. After a few steps, IRMA speaks.*]

IRMA. Please.

ADELE. You wanted to remind me not to forget the slippers.

IRMA [*runs to window and calls after her*]. The slippers.

SIPOS [*to IRMA as though to embrace her*]. Irma, tell me, my child—

IRMA [*looks at him bravely*]. Yes, Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS [*with downcast eyes, embarrassed*]. Did you know . . . that the janitor is named Popovics?

IRMA [*sniffing*]. Yes. . . His wife . . . is—Mrs. Popovics.

[*Sobs.*]

SIPOS. Um— [*Pause.*] And

what's going to happen to you, now?

IRMA. I don't know. Now I'd like to sit next to you. May I?

SIPOS. Of course you may.

IRMA. After all my shame?

SIPOS. After even more.

IRMA [*happily sits next to SIPOS*]. But I have a pure soul, anyway, haven't I? Starlight and beautiful archangel, why aren't you angry now?

SIPOS. I've been through an awful lot, my child.

IRMA. I'm going to be happy now, Mr. Sipsos.

SIPOS. You don't say.

IRMA. Now it's going to be eternal happiness and beautiful May of Spring.

SIPOS. But it is summer now.

IRMA. Always, until death do us part, my flying aviator and my only left half-back.

SIPOS. I'm a pretty tired half-back. [*ILONA enters and remains below desk, right.*] Why did you go to a place like that—

IRMA. That was the way I wanted to commit suicide. If I had jumped into the Danube and they had found my beautiful pale corpse in the morning, I wouldn't have been able to cry for myself any more. This way I could have always cried for my pure love and young soul.

SIPOS. A child like you in a place like that.

IRMA. You told me I belonged there.

SIPOS. You don't belong there.

IRMA. You said "Whoever goes there belongs there already."

SIPOS. That's not true, you went there in your sorrow.

IRMA. That's why others go there too.

[*ILONA starts crying.*]

SIPOS. How do you know?

IRMA. Ilona Keczoli told me. That's why she went there, too.

SIPOS. She doesn't belong there either.

IRMA. Where does she belong?

ILONA. I belong somewhere out in the country, please. I'd like to mow grass.

[*Cries softly.*]

SIPOS. Well . . . why don't you?

ILONA. I haven't enough money for that, sir. When I'm rich enough, I'll get married. That costs a lot of money.

IRMA. Yes, it's cost me ten kronen already.

SIPOS. You're getting married?

IRMA. Yes.

SIPOS. To whom?

IRMA. To you.

SIPOS. Sure?

IRMA. Sure.

SIPOS. The funniest thing about it, is that you're probably right with that crazy little soul of yours. [*To ILONA, who is sobbing quietly.*] What's the matter with you?

ILONA. I love to see private citizens love like you do.

SIPOS. Isn't it funny that a pretty girl should love an old man like me?

ILONA. Oh, no!

SIPOS. Could you love me?

ILONA. Sure! You only get suffering from handsome men. The only men I really love are the ugly ones.

IRMA. Oh, you shouldn't have said that. Tell me, beautiful one, will we take lots of baths?

SIPOS. We'll do nothing but bathe.

IRMA. And will we go to the Classics?

SIPOS. Never!

IRMA. But you'll marry me?

SIPOS. As soon as possible.

IRMA. And we'll have children, won't we?

SIPOS. Right off.

IRMA. And I'll be their mother, won't I?

SIPOS. If you behave yourself.

IRMA. And what will you be?

SIPOS. Their grandfather.

[*The SERGEANT and the MAGISTRATE reënter.*]

SERGEANT [*to ILONA*]. What, you still here?

ILONA. Yes, sir.

SERGEANT. I told you you could go. [*ILONA cries.*] What are you crying about? I told you you could go.

ILONA. It's so beautiful to see pure love like that.

MAGISTRATE. What's that? Love in a police court. [*To ILONA.*] Get out.

ILONA [*as she goes out*]. Yes, but God knows that is like love was before the war.

[*Exits.*]

IRMA. May we go, sir?

PROSECUTOR. Yes. [*Then to SIPOS.*] Where is she going to? You seem to like her rather well. Well?

IRMA. He likes me very rather well. He just doesn't want to answer.

PROSECUTOR. Well, I can fix that with the authorities in short order. Would you like to become her guardian?—

SIPOS. No, sir. No one can guard this girl. I'd rather marry her.

PROSECUTOR. How old are you?

SIPOS. Forty-eight.

PROSECUTOR. And the girl?

SIPOS. Going on twenty.

PROSECUTOR. In there you said you were twenty-three. Why did you lie?

IRMA. To be a little nearer Mr. Sipos.

SIPOS. Sir, the truth of the matter is that there is still a little difference of age between us, about thirty years. In seventy years she will be ninety and I will be one hundred and eighteen and everybody will say "two old people."

MAGISTRATE. Well that's a point of view, a bit fantastic, but . . .

SERGEANT. What do you think of them—

MAGISTRATE. A big damn fool and a little one.

[*SERGEANT and MAGISTRATE exit into courtroom.*]

IRMA. Let's go, Lajos.

SIPOS. Lajos—

IRMA. I should say so—

SIPOS. No more aviator—?

IRMA. No. After this it will be just you, Lajos.

SIPOS. Why?

IRMA. Because the aviator fell into the water and the rooster cackled.

SIPOS. Do you think I can go through the streets with you looking like a second-hand Christmas tree? Where is your old dress?

IRMA. I left it at Ilona Keczei's. We'll stop for it on our way.

SIPOS. No, no, my child, we are through with people like that.

IRMA. As you like, Lajos.

SIPOS. I'll buy you a new one at the corner store.

IRMA. A beautiful one?

SIPOS. Yes, a beautiful one but a cheap one.

IRMA. Let's go, Lajos.

SIPOS. Happen what may, we'll
start out in this miserable world.

[*They start, he recalls the grip
and turns for it. IRMA rushes
and picks it up.*]

IRMA. I'll carry the grip.

SIPOS. All right, you can always
carry the grip.

IRMA. Now I can recite my

poem and you will have to listen.

[*Exuberantly.*]

"Faded flower of the Spring,
Beaten blossom in the rain,
All the leaves are whispering,
That my heart is full of pain."

[*They disappear through the
door center.*]

CURTAIN

R I V I E R A

Translated by

FRANCIS EDWARDS FARAGOH

Not yet produced in America

CHARACTERS

MISCH

LOUISE (LUJZA)

CASELLA

ELVIRA

CIBULKA

MARTIN (MÁRTON)

BALLA

OLD LADY

MR. GRILL

FIRST FIREMAN

SECOND FIREMAN

TWO WORKMEN

PORTER

THREE LADIES AND THREE GENTLEMEN MADE OF WAX

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

Action takes place in a large department store, from night until morning.

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *A section of the lofty floor of a large metropolitan department store. To the right and left glass cases border the stage. In front of the cases, narrow counters run from front to back. In the center of the stage, leaning with its back against the back-drop, an enormous glass case in the nature of a show window, with the glass windows missing just now. The display in it represents a salon. A society group of wax figures can be seen. In the foreground are seated two gentlemen and two ladies, in the*

back stand one gentleman and one lady. One of the sitting men and the standing one are American-appearing dandies. The third male figure is a faithful representation of CASELLA, who is to appear later. The lady who is standing is a slender blonde, the two seated ladies are pretty women, according to taste. The ladies are wearing hats and fashionable afternoon visiting-dresses. The gentlemen wear afternoon suits: jackets, black cutaways. On every piece of apparel there is a sign, with

some "copy." The glass case stands on a platform. An ornate living room set is in it. Rich cloth hangings furnish its background. Sconces, a chandelier. On the back wall, two elevator doors, one to the right, the other to the left of the glass case. A few chairs about the counters. The display is in semi-darkness. It is night, after the closing hour.

AT RISE: When the curtain rises, MISCH is alone on the stage. He is seated at one of the counters, reading a newspaper. MISCH is thirty-five years old, a handsome, serious sales-clerk, fairly well-dressed, well-groomed. Women like him. His employers like him, because women like him. He has had a great past in the department store: salesladies, female clients of less fastidious tastes. But already he is beginning to get somewhat nervous, for the years are passing. And he is poor. There is hardly any other hope than to grow old in this place. Two firemen come in, from the right. They walk about with lanterns, being on a tour of inspection.]

FIRST FIREMAN. Good evening, Mr. Misch.

MISCH [*from behind his paper*]. Good evening.

FIRST FIREMAN. A little rest after closing hours, Mr. Misch?

MISCH. Not at all!

SECOND FIREMAN. I have a note about it here. Nightwork. On the fourth floor, in the Balla Department.

FIRST FIREMAN. That's different. How do you please to feel, dear Mr. Misch?

MISCH. From what your colleague has just said, it can be seen just how I please to feel. I've been working

in this department for eleven years, and they still call it Balla Department. Not Misch Department. That's how I please to feel.

FIRST FIREMAN. There will come the day when this will be Misch Department.

MISCH. No, my dear fellow. Misch Department, at best, will be somewhere in the provinces, in a very small, obscure town, a tiny, little Misch store, and in it there will be a little, sad, worn, old Misch. And the ladies of the little town will not even know, that in this palace, he had once been the famous, handsome Misch, the lion of fashion.

SECOND FIREMAN. The pride of the department store. The well-dressed Mr. Misch.

MISCH. That was a long time ago. In those days, I starved, but I used to be well dressed. Now I starve and am ragged.

FIRST FIREMAN. Well, ragged is an exaggeration, Mr. Misch.

MISCH. Have you any idea how I used to dress formerly? It's better not even to speak of that.

FIRST FIREMAN. Are you taking inventory to-night?

MISCH. No. This is moving day. The middle of winter is here. In the Balla Department it is already spring. The rich people are going south, worthy fire-force. God forbid that they go in their winter clothes! To-night we are arranging the Riviera for their benefit. The ladies will now receive Crêpe Georgette and Crêpe Romaine. Do you understand?

No. They are eating caviar and pineapple. We, my honored fire-fighter friends, get horse-meat sausages and sour potcheese.

FIRST FIREMAN. Do you stay until morning on such occasions?

MISCH. I stay here until I've dressed my wax dolls—this haughty company, which has not deigned to speak to me all these years—although I know them well. I change the clothes of these aristocrats four times a season. At such times I see them naked. In spite of that fact, never have they spoken a single word to me. Please believe me; it's detestable work. Gentlemen of the fire-force! How can one make a lot of money?

FIRST FIREMAN. I don't know, Mr. Misch. But one thing is sure; not by putting out fires.

SECOND FIREMAN. What ought we to say, Mr. Misch, if you consider your work detestable!

FIRST FIREMAN. What is ours, then? Walking around every night, in a circle, up, down, from one inspection period to the other, from night till morning!

MISCH. Of course, you would like a nice big fire.

FIRST FIREMAN. God forbid! That isn't good for anybody. But to a nice *little* fire, I won't say no. That's good for everybody. People don't get hurt, goods are used up, the employees get a vacation, the firemen get rewards, the insurance company is glad that it wasn't a big fire, the firm is glad that there was any fire at all. Everybody is happy. We are modest people.

[Enter LOUISE.]

LOUISE. What's this—haven't you started yet? [Firemen salute.] Good evening, gentlemen of the fire department.

FIRST FIREMAN [ceremoniously].

Homage to the beautiful Madame Louise!

SECOND FIREMAN. Hear! Hear!

LOUISE [laughing]. How I am being fêted! What is happening to you to-day?

FIRST FIREMAN [significantly]. Everything has its own cause and reason.

[They salute and start out.]

MISCH. Farewell!

[Firemen go out left.]

LOUISE [looking around]. You haven't even begun yet?

MISCH. You can see that I haven't. I've been waiting for the stuff for the last hour.

LOUISE. Where are we going to eat?

MISCH. I don't know.

LOUISE. What's that? No money again?

MISCH. Oh, there will be enough for supper.

LOUISE. It's horrible weather outside. Sleet is falling. I can just imagine how my poor father must be freezing on the street corner.

MISCH. Why doesn't he go home on nights like this?

LOUISE. Even in this weather he can sell about thirty papers by midnight. He wouldn't go home for the world. There he shivers, in his thin overcoat. The other newsdealers laugh at him, poor thing, because he is an Italian and can't stand this climate. We adore the sun. And really it must be very beautiful. I never saw the Italian sun. Well, don't we go anywhere?

MISCH. What am I to do, when I'm to put new clothes on these scoundrels?

LOUISE. Watch out. Many times I've wanted to tell you that you

mustn't curse them any more, now that the new boss is sitting among them. Your old friend. They're liable to tell on you.

MISCH. Just let them tell. And he isn't my friend. Never was, and I never told you that he was. Take care of what you're saying. And since he's made a name for himself he especially isn't my friend. This, too, is such parvenu tastelessness! To seat his wax image among these manikins, with all the celebrities! Rockefeller, Ford, Jeritza, the wife of the Russian Ambassador, a French Countess! He has to sit here among them! Mr. Casella, as a world celebrity!

LOUISE. He certainly is that. A man that's made so large a fortune so young!

MISCH. Through robbery.

LOUISE. There's no other way. Besides, whom did he rob? He robbed the banks. They don't deserve better.

MISCH. Scoundrel!

LOUISE. You're in a bad humor to-day.

MISCH. Scoundrel— Scoundrel.

LOUISE. Are you always so angry with him when you see him?

MISCH. To-day I am especially angry with him.

LOUISE. More than yesterday?

MISCH. More.

LOUISE. Why?

MISCH. Don't be so foxy. What do I care about the banks? Don't be afraid, I am not angry because this department store came into his hands with one scratch of his pen, together with seventy other enterprises, when he cleaned out the Lombard Bank on the Exchange. Let him have seven hundred. I don't care. I've seen him

eat half a frankfurter for supper, when we used to live together in a furnished room. There were times that I gave him half a cigarette when I had only one.

LOUISE. Well, isn't it lovely that he's become Napoleon after all?

MISCH. He became a blackguard.

LOUISE. But what is the matter with you to-day?

MISCH. Don't be a hypocrite.

LOUISE. What do you want of me?

MISCH. Of you, nothing. But I am going to teach that scoundrel some decency, and I'll even beat him up, if you especially want to know, even if all the money in the world is guarding him. Just let him dare continue what he started this afternoon.

LOUISE. This afternoon?

MISCH. With you. Yes, with you.

LOUISE. With me?

MISCH. Yes, he started with you.

LOUISE. What, you already know?

MISCH. The whole store is full of it. People talk only of that. Didn't you hear the firemen getting enthusiastic over you?

LOUISE. It's not quite an hour since he came down to us and already . . . the whole store— How did you say it?

MISCH. Is full of it. And you, instead of beginning with that, started to speak about the bad weather and how many newspapers your papa sells on the street corner. You're evading the issue.

LOUISE. Pardon me, I was just starting to speak of it.

MISCH. This is all a fake. You should have rushed in on me without any hesitation, out of sorts, and

panting and outraged, with: "Imagine, my dear, what's happened. Casella made me a filthy offer!"

LOUISE. That isn't true!

MISCH. It can't be untrue. Because if he as much as addressed you, if he only looked at you, that was already a filthy offer.

LOUISE. Why?

MISCH. Because if you take this situation: a billionaire industrial king, young, handsome, impudent, a thief—and a twenty-year-old sales-girl in the glove department in the basement of his store, down in the cellar, with torn shoes on her feet, whose father is freezing and whose lover is starving—if he only notices you, that no longer is a mere offer, it is much more than that: it means that you have already accepted the offer.

LOUISE. None, none of that, is true.

MISCH. Then why don't you tell me what *is* true? Why do you keep it from me?

LOUISE. Because you don't give me a chance to speak. You weren't there, and still you seem to know better.

MISCH. You, of course, were there.

LOUISE. Of course I was. This afternoon, around half-past six, there suddenly appeared in our department a . . . a . . .

MISCH. A handsome young man.

LOUISE. Not so very handsome; not so very young.

MISCH. Younger than I.

LOUISE. And handsomer, as well.

MISCH. And still not sufficiently handsome.

LOUISE. Not quite. In other words, my dear, he comes, looks around among the gloves, takes a few

pairs of cheap gloves from a large box, looks at me. . . .

MISCH. With his eyes.

LOUISE. Yes. With what else should he look at me?

MISCH. No, no. I said that only because you give it in such detail. As though it were some historic event.

LOUISE. For us that was an important happening.

MISCH. Of course, Casella! The great Casella! In person.

LOUISE. Aren't you going to let me tell it?

MISCH. Of course I am going to. He looked at you with his eyes, probably with both his eyes, and with the thumb and forefinger of his right hand he took out a pair of gloves. He asked in C-flat: "How much is this pair of gloves?"

LOUISE. That's right. You see, it was a month ago that this department store which he . . .

MISCH. Stole.

LOUISE. . . . came to own, together with the bank. And to-day for the first time he was here to look around, because he has gigantic plans—he wants to enlarge the place to three times its size. . . .

MISCH. In other words, you said: "This pair of gloves costs two-forty."

LOUISE. No. Three-sixty. And he was very charming to me.

MISCH. You knew who he was?

LOUISE. Every one recognized him immediately. By these wax figures. He has one of these likenesses of him on every floor.

MISCH. And he was charming to you?

LOUISE. Very.

MISCH. Because most likely you smiled at him.

LOUISE. I can't be selling gloves, weeping.

MISCH. There you're right. Even coffins have to be sold with a smile. In other words, you are having supper with him to-night.

LOUISE. No. Only if you come along.

MISCH [*astonished*]. How, if I come along?

LOUISE. Because that's the way he invited me—for a threesome.

MISCH. What's that? Then he really did invite you?

LOUISE. I'm telling you that it's together with you. But you won't let me tell it, you are so nervous—you have never been so before.

MISCH [*grinning bitterly*]. What's this? Did I guess it? I said it in fun, and it was the truth? What's this—am I a prophet? What do you say? This would drive any one mad. And you still dare claim that he made no dirty offer? What did I tell you: you have already accepted, the bargain is concluded, even I am in it, out of pity—"Let him also come."—I am already laughed at, I am already cheated. This went quickly. What time is it?

LOUISE. Half-past seven.

MISCH. He came at half-past six. Quick work. Unbelievable. I am a prophet. I am a psychologist. I am a jackass. I have been a jackass for the last hour.

LOUISE. My dear, I confess I didn't like his first few words, either. He looked at me, asked me how long I'd been here, what my name was, and did I know who he was. Then he asked me to go to dinner with him to-night.

MISCH. Immediately.

LOUISE. Immediately. Really, at

that moment, some sort of wild sparks seemed to come from his eyes.

MISCH. Wild sparks!

LOUISE. That I didn't like at all. I said to him, right away, with a certain sharpness: "I eat dinner every night with Ferdinand Misch, whom you know very well."

MISCH. You said that with a certain sharpness?

LOUISE. Yes. With a certain sharpness.

MISCH. I really thank you. And that was heard by every one there, of course.

LOUISE. No one heard it.

MISCH. But by this time every one knows it.

LOUISE. Interesting! You are right. By this time every one knows it.

MISCH. How?

LOUISE. I haven't the least idea.

MISCH. Horrible. He, of course, did not remember me.

LOUISE. How can you say such a thing? He cried out! Actually cried out, with the greatest pleasure. He says: "What Misch? Not really my friend Misch, not really my dear, beloved, lost friend Misch?" Says I: "That's who it is, yes." Says I: "He has frequently mentioned that you two started out together." He says to that: "Well, this is unexpected luck." And then, what else? He says: "What happiness," and "Well, well, that dear Misch, that beloved Misch!"

MISCH. It's touching how you try to make him become sympathetic to me, although you know well that we parted in anger, on account of that dirty deal he put over on me. In those days he wasn't robbing banks yet; instead, he stole a small amount from me. He cheated me. He

cheated that beloved Misch in a little deal we had together. The beloved Misch!

LOUISE. You've never said that he cheated you.

MISCH. Legally he was right. But as far as decency was concerned, he was not right. Legally he is always in the right, for laws exist for these gentlemen. Then, too, he said, "Beloved Misch." What else did he say?

LOUISE. He wanted to know why you haven't yet reported to him.

MISCH. Didn't you laugh in his face?

LOUISE. No.

MISCH. You did wrong. I am poor, but self-respecting. He lives just as far from me as I from him. If he should happen to want something from me, let him come to me.

LOUISE. Well, that's what he's doing.

MISCH. What?

LOUISE. Just that—he is coming to you.

MISCH. Here? When?

LOUISE. At eight sharp. He wants us three to eat together. I told him immediately that you would not come, because you are obstinate. So now, he is coming here to invite you personally.

MISCH. What is going to happen at this rate? Quick! What else is there? Let's get through with it!

LOUISE. Nothing. My dear, I did not go with him alone, because I know what sort of person you are. I said to him too that if I were to go to dinner with some one, you would immediately say I had gone to dinner with some one.

MISCH. Remarkable! Bricks are falling on my head! Big stones are

falling on my head! One after the other. Until half-past six this afternoon, there was nothing the matter with me. And now bricks and floors, whole department stores, are coming down on my head.

LOUISE. Now, why are you raving?

MISCH. Because you should have said to him that it's no use for him to come here. I will not even stop to speak to him, because I abhor him.

LOUISE. Tell it to him yourself. I was glad that he wanted to see you at all. It's certain that he is going to promote you. I was so happy, I seemed already to see the career that is in store for you.

MISCH. Over your body.

LOUISE. Nonsense! An old pall!

MISCH. I take exception to that; that I never said to you. I never spoke of him in that tone.

LOUISE. All of a sudden you're trying to send him so far from you.

MISCH. Because you so noticeably want to bring him close to me. What do you think he wants, you goose? He wants to buy you from me. Well, I do not sell women. I am a poor man, but so far I have only bought women. Let him take you away by force, if he can.

LOUISE. But who is saying that he wants to take me away? What are you getting so nervous about? Why are you getting all wound up? I didn't even suspect that this would excite you so. Well, then, if you don't feel like it, you'll simply tell him that we're not going. And I will stay here with you. We'll eat something cold right here and I will help you. All right?

MISCH. All right.

LOUISE. Aren't you glad?

MISCH. No. No.

LOUISE. Why?

MISCH. Because this is no longer like our usual evenings together. This is already a sacrifice. The great Casella has invited the poor young lady to eat something hot. The young lady sighs deeply and eats something cold with the little clerk. A missed opportunity, which you will bewail for twenty years.

LOUISE. But then I'd rather eat cold things with you than hot with him.

MISCH. That was true yesterday. Now you are going to leave me on account of him.

LOUISE. No!

MISCH. And something worse may happen, too. But you are not so cruel as to be dishonest. You are soft-hearted; you are going to be untrue to me—with him.

LOUISE. But why do you think so far ahead? Your imagination immediately runs away with you!

MISCH. Just you wait. I am already excited, but this is going to get still worse, because that was just the beginning down there by the gloves. The rest is still to come.

LOUISE. There can't possibly be any "rest." He is going out of town to-morrow. So there you are!

MISCH. What, you know so much already? Where is he going?

LOUISE. To the Riviera.

MISCH. He said so?

LOUISE. Yes. He's going to-morrow.

MISCH. And he asked you along.

LOUISE. Go away with all these inventions of yours. This time you guessed wrong. He said no more than that he is going. Alone. Because he has no one to go with him.

MISCH. And he sighed.

LOUISE. Just wait. Yes. But that was before I had mentioned you.

MISCH. And what do you think—Why did he say that—and why did he sigh? He wants *you* to go with him.

LOUISE. That's possible.

MISCH. You see!

LOUISE. Really. Now that you say it . . . it's really possible. You are a clever boy, after all.

MISCH. I am very clever. Now I have invited you to the Riviera for him.

LOUISE [*thinking*]. Interesting. So that is why he repeated it so many times! . . .

MISCH. I am very clever. How many times did he say it?

LOUISE. Twice.

MISCH. Come . . . three times!

LOUISE. Wait. Yes. Four times.

MISCH. If I could only kill that man!

LOUISE. They'd lock you up.

MISCH. Legally he is in the right again.

LOUISE. Remarkable how he gets you all out of sorts. So far you have changed women as easily as you change your coat.

MISCH. That was different. You, I love. Alas, better than you love me. I am very much ashamed of myself. I'm getting old, that's the why of this whole thing. While I was young, I couldn't get so entangled with a woman. You are the first. You don't even know how much I suffer on account of you. But that is not to your credit, it is merely the first sign of my growing age. I am going to marry you.

LOUISE. I don't say that. That's not why I love you. And anyway, as

soon as I say five words to somebody, you immediately want to marry me. Wait, at least, until I really fall in love with some one.

MISCH. Now I will really marry you.

LOUISE. Now I don't want it.

MISCH. You see?

LOUISE. I see what?

MISCH. That you don't want to. Well, what is it that you do want?

LOUISE. I don't know.

MISCH. To go away.

LOUISE. I don't believe so.

MISCH. You oughtn't to believe it, at that. For the time being, he has not invited you. But even if he were to invite you, don't think that it could come off so easily. After all, I am still Misch! That gentleman may get something from me which he never yet got from anybody.

LOUISE [*strutting about among the wax figures*]. What an important personage I've become in this world all of a sudden. [*Pauses before the Casella figure.*] This head isn't bad. Now I can see that the likeness is very good.

MISCH [*turns on the lights of the show-case*]. Here. See better.

LOUISE. That is Jeritza there. That one is the Princess Woronzieff. Who is this?

MISCH. This one we have named the Young Rockefeller.

LOUISE. And what name did you give to that one?

MISCH. Ford. That is very stylish now. Look at them well. They already interest you, don't they? A new world! They are also going to the Riviera. By to-morrow they will all be there. Come up in the morning, you'll see them all ready.

Here sleet is falling, there the sun shines on the lemon flowers. Here it's cold, there it's hot. Here there are poor people, there, rich ones. Again they're not saying a word. They've been standing here close to my poverty for years; they dress, undress, smile elegantly, enjoy themselves, keep silent, are never sick, never die. They know me; look, how they smile at me!

LOUISE. Why do you bother with them?

MISCH. To-day they begin to interest me, too. Because now they are waiting for you and already grin at me mockingly. See how they laugh! They jeer at me, jeer at me and since to-night this one laughs the loudest, this robber, this . . .

[*Raises his fist, threatening the Casella figure. ELVIRA enters right. ELVIRA is one of the store's salesladies. A comely, sad girl, nearer to thirty than to twenty.*]

MISCH. What do you wish?

ELVIRA. Hello, Louise.

LOUISE. Hello.

[*Sighs.*]

ELVIRA. Mr. Department Head Balla will be here right away with the dresses.

MISCH. What's that? Mr. Balla sending envoys? Since when do you precede Mr. Balla like a herald, with a trumpet?

ELVIRA. Mr. Misch is so cruel to me again.

LOUISE. Because you are in love with him and are enough of a goose to show it all the time, and such things irritate men.

ELVIRA. I am not the expert in these things that you are. I am just

one big chunk of heart. But to shout at me like this!

MISCH. Forgive me, but I am very nervous.

ELVIRA. On account of that Casella affair?

MISCH [*curiously*]. What Casella affair?

ELVIRA. Casella's falling in love with Louise.

MISCH. Falling in love with her! He's already fallen in love with her! He's already marrying her! A Casella affair! There is already a Casella affair! I am going to distribute forty slaps among two or three of my colleagues, and then there'll be no Casella affair! [*Roaring.*] And if there should still be a Casella affair, please remember well, madame, you are not going to profit by that, because even if we two do part, there'll be no Misch affair for you and no Elvira affair for me. That one thing is out of the question.

ELVIRA [*horrified*]. But Mr. Misch! What a tone to use to me!

LOUISE. You are inconsiderate! For the last ten minutes you've acted as though you had gone crazy.

ELVIRA. I come in innocently, to do him a favor. I tell him in advance of the Department Head's—

MISCH. You just do me no favors. Anyway, what are you doing here after closing hours?

ELVIRA. I thought perhaps I could help you. To holler at me so!

LOUISE. Leave him alone, he is crazy to-day.

MISCH. Not yet, but I feel that I am going to do something mad to-day. I'm going to do some mad thing only once in my life, but then it will be something grand! [*Races up and down, out of breath, then sits*

down wearily among the wax figures in the store window. Mumbles to himself.] Casella affair! . . .

LOUISE [*steps into the show case. Softly*]. It's terrible how nervous you are . . .

[*Makes an appealing gesture.*]

ELVIRA [*timidly, entering the show case*]. Don't be angry, please . . .

[*With a gesture of appeal, sits down among the figures. There is silence now. The three living people are motionless among the wax figures. Long pause. Now they merge into the show window . . . every one of them a wax figure. MARTIN enters right.*]

MARTIN [*looks at the rigid ensemble, then speaks softly*]. Mr. Department Head Balla is coming.

[*The three living people, as though awakening from a dream, begin to move. They come down from the platform of the show window. The procession enters. Leading it, is DEPARTMENT HEAD BALLA, an exaggeratedly well groomed, elderly man, with documents. Then come the following: An elderly, bespectacled lady. CIBULKA, a lively, fifteen- or sixteen-year-old girl apprentice. MARTIN, an elderly porter. Two other porters come, each pushing his little hand-cart. These carts somewhat resemble the three-wheeled barrows used by the porters of railway stations. They are high, front and back, and open at the sides. On one cart there are boxes, cartons, pieces of scenery, willow furniture. On the other, among similar*

things, two dressed child wax figures. The first workman carries palms. The other, props belonging to the show window. Between them comes Mr. GRILL, a very stern, wild, black-bearded, large man, who is a clerk in the office.]

BALLA [*very elegantly and very saccharinly*]. Heartfelt greetings and homage to Ferdinand Misch! I have the honor to bid you good evening. I kiss your hand, Miss Louise.

MISCH. Good evening, Mr. Department Head.

[*The two PORTERS and WORKMEN unload the stuff from the carts. MARTIN opens boxes. The OLD LADY begins taking out dresses.*]

ELVIRA. To shout at me so!

LOUISE. Good evening, Mr. Balla.

BALLA. Miss Louise is always beautiful, but to-night La France roses seem to grace her countenance.

MISCH. Mr. Balla, in my opinion, always used to use "face."— This is the first time I have the pleasure of hearing "countenance."

BALLA. "Countenance" is more formal.

MISCH. And why are you more formal to-day than at other times?

BALLA. There's a reason for everything.

MISCH [*looks at ELVIRA*]. Casella affair!

ELVIRA. Why do you look at me?

MISCH. Aren't you glad that I do look at you?

ELVIRA. Yes, I am glad.

MISCH. Then why do you ask?
[*To BALLA.*] At your command, Mr. Department Head.

BALLA. I do not command, I beg. I beg you to take a seat.

MISCH. I do not take a seat. I sit down. Last autumn you made me stand when we switched over to the winter fashions. And I stood last winter, too, when we dressed these scoundrels— [*Points to show case.*] In winter sports clothes, with the St. Moritz scenery. Now you offer me a seat. What's all this, Mr. Balla?

BALLA. This is honoring our pride.

MISCH. I am your pride?

LOUISE. Quit that caustic tone.

BALLA. Let him alone, madame. Even that is welcome from him.

MISCH. Neither were you "madame," yesterday.

[*Goes to his place.*]

BALLA. Don't sit there, there's a draught in that spot.

MISCH. You protect me. You do not realize that it is an especial ambition of mine to catch cold. That is why I sit directly in the draught.

BALLA. Your desire to sit is a command for me. I will also sit in the draught.

[*Assumes his place.*]

MISCH. You mock me.

BALLA. No.

MISCH. Then you are flattering me.

BALLA. Never in my life have I done that.

MISCH. I hereby announce in front of every one that Mr. Casella has not yet asked for Miss Louise's hand, and that I am not Mr. Casella's brother-in-law as yet. On the contrary, we are angry with each other.

BALLA. I wish that I were on intimate enough terms with him to be angry with him. Mr. Misch, you gave yourself away. Please speak a few words in my behalf.

MISCH. Let's get on with the work, Mr. Department Head.

OLD LADY [*standing by a pile of dresses*]. I am going to dictate the numbers, dear, sweet Mr. Misch.

MISCH. Captivating. [*To MARTIN.*] You say something pretty, too.

MARTIN. Please take a seat, Your Excellency.

MISCH. Excellency — very good. That much I expected. As soon as I become Your Majesty, I'll have you hung, Martin.

MARTIN. To your health, Your Highness.

MISCH. Drunken pig!

MARTIN. Quite so, Majesty.

[*They sit down. Books and papers are brought out. MARTIN is unpacking the boxes and taking out the dresses one by one. During these preparations, LOUISE and ELVIRA are softly conversing, standing on the left.*]

LOUISE. The way you look at Misch is simply scandalous. Everybody is going to notice it.

ELVIRA. I envy you so.

LOUISE. For Misch?

ELVIRA. For him, too. And for everything.

[*LOUISE sighs.*]

OLD LADY [*to MARTIN*]. That's not next. I put them there in the proper order.

ELVIRA. Aren't you happy?

LOUISE. To-day—no.

ELVIRA. You still were yesterday?

LOUISE. Yes.

MARTIN. I have it, please. This bundle belongs to that batch.

ELVIRA. And you will be happy by to-morrow?

LOUISE. Who knows?

BALLA. Let us begin, then. Where is your little notebook?

MISCH [*searching*]. It was here a moment ago. Why do you disturb my stuff?

ELVIRA. What does Misch say to the exciting news?

LOUISE. You've heard what he says.

ELVIRA. Any other man would be glad.

LOUISE. He's not that sort.

MISCH [*having found his book*]. I have it! [*Starts to write in it.*] The date . . . December . . .

ELVIRA. And your mother?

LOUISE. She doesn't know yet.

ELVIRA. What is your mother doing?

LOUISE. For supper she warms the cabbage left over from noon.

ELVIRA. And your father?

LOUISE. Eats the whole business.

ELVIRA. And your mother?

LOUISE. Doesn't eat.

ELVIRA. And your father?

LOUISE. Stands for it.

ELVIRA. Well, and is all that going to go on the same way?

LOUISE [*nervously*]. What do you expect of me?

BALLA. Miss Sophia, can we begin?

OLD LADY. Yes, Mr. Department Head.

ELVIRA [*softly to LOUISE*]. I saw your first love, Kotanyi, on the street. He's looking rotten.

LOUISE. Oh, please!

ELVIRA. Does it hurt you to have me mention him? Don't let it hurt you, because he was with a pretty woman.

LOUISE. Well, you see now that these gentlemen do not die of it.

ELVIRA [*sighing*]. Only we die of it.

OLD LADY [*with a lady's frock in her hand*]. 3423. A.L. 45.

BALLA [*makes a mark in his notebook next to this number while he repeats*]. 3423. A.L. 45.

[*MISCH puts down the number in his notebook. LOUISE and ELVIRA, talking, slowly approach MISCH.*]

LOUISE. We do not die of it.

ELVIRA. I'll die of it.

LOUISE. I won't.

ELVIRA. I'll die of it.

LOUISE. I won't.

ELVIRA. I will.

LOUISE. I won't.

MISCH [*looks up from his book, shouts at them*]. Silence, please!

LOUISE [*steps closer*]. Pretty dress.

MISCH. 3423. A.L. 45. I have it.

[*OLD LADY puts down the dress, takes another one from CIBULKA, who is handing her the dresses.*]

CIBULKA. This is the prettiest.

OLD LADY. You are not to talk, Cibulka, no one asked you. 6848. Z.K. 14.

BALLA [*marking it*]. 6848. Z.K. 14. You are right, this is a beautiful dress. Before Casella, we never had such material. Believe me, Miss Louise, Mr. Casella has brought a new spirit into this store.

MISCH. I have also noticed that. [*Marking.*] 6848. Z.K. 14.

BALLA. Please believe, Miss Louise, that while this is no battlefield, even in this field one can become a Napoleon. And if there is a Napoleon in this field it is undoubtedly Mr. Casella. Dear Miss Louise!

MISCH [*while writing*]. Miss Louise takes notice of the fact that

you flatter Mr. Casella to death and she will call it to his attention when the opportunity presents itself.

BALLA. I think you are making fun of me, Mr. Misch.

MISCH. I think so, myself. [*To OLD LADY.*] Go on, Sophia.

OLD LADY. At your command, Mr. Misch.

MISCH. Here Mr. Balla commands, not I. Just let us stick to the tone we used yesterday. I refuse all these new-fangled bits of politeness—and, what's more, with disgust.

OLD LADY. You are very irritable, Mr. Misch. [*Takes up a dress.*] 4867. J.R. 21.

BALLA [*looking it up in his book*]. 4867. J.R. 21. I consider Casella a greater man than the French Citroen and the German Stinnes. Casella represents the American method. It was J.R. 21, wasn't it?

OLD LADY. Yes, Mr. Department Head.

BALLA. Thank you, Miss Sophia. [*With a gesture.*] The heights he can still reach! After all, he is still so young!

[*Holding his glasses to his eyes, he stares at the wax likeness.*]

CIBULKA [*cries out, admiringly*]. This is very pretty!

MISCH. 4867. J.R. 21. You're not to speak, my child, because all this is not for you. Louise, you also consider this one pretty, don't you? J.R. No?

BALLA. J.R.

LOUISE. Yes. But it's time you quit this whole business.

MISCH. And 21. Yes?

BALLA. Yes, 21. In Miss Louise's person our mighty superior has honored the entire store. That ought to be a matter of pride to her.

MISCH. And to me?

BALLA. Especially to you!

MISCH. Thank you. If I should make up with Casella, my first business will be to have you fired.

BALLA [*laughing*]. Do not be angry with me, Mr. Misch. [*To OLD LADY.*] These are the three ladies' costumes for the show case. Number 3423 is Jeritza's, 6848 is for Princess Woronzieff, and the Countess Clermont gets Number 4867. Have you got it all?

MISCH [*who has been putting this down*]. Yes.

OLD LADY. In this box are the same three models in other shades. [*Opens box.*] With the same numbers—the colors are indicated.

[*Puts them out on the counter.*]

MISCH [*glances there*]. All right.

BALLA. Please let me have the three men's suits, Mr. Grill.

[*The OLD LADY joins LOUISE and ELVIRA. MR. GRILL steps forward. CIBULKA stands opposite MISCH and stares at him lovingly. MARTIN keeps on handing MR. GRILL the men's suits.*]

GRILL. One dress suit for the wax figure of Mr. Casella. [*With a bow to the statue.*] 126. R.L.

BALLA. 126 R.L. The dress suit fits him to perfection.

MISCH. Mr. Grill bowed to the statue. We take cognizance of it and will communicate it to Mr. Casella. 126. R.L. Further.

GRILL. One sport suit for Rockefeller.

MISCH. He isn't "mister"? Just plain Rockefeller?

GRILL. 208. K.Z.

BALLA. 208. K.Z.

MISCH. 208. K.Z.

GRILL [*in a trembling voice*]. And the dinner jacket for Ford.

MISCH [*writing*]. Also not "mister." Just Ford.

GRILL [*in a more and more trembling voice*]. 604. K.Y.

BALLA. 604. K.Y.

MISCH. 604. K.Y. What is it, Mr. Grill? Are you crying?

GRILL [*weeping*]. I am so sensitive. I can't stand Mr. Misch's sarcastic manner. Forgive me, Mr. Misch, but I am very sensitive.

[*Weeps.*]

BALLA [*stands up*]. Mr. Grill, I partly envy you, partly pity you for your sensitiveness, but Mr. Misch is a power and such an important factor in our store that one cannot resent such things coming from him. We have finished transferring the goods and will proceed to the children's dress department.

GRILL [*with subsiding sobs*]. Here are the tags with the prices.

[*Hands them over.*]

BALLA. Martin, you stay here.

MARTIN [*weeping*]. Yes, Mr. Department Head.

BALLA. What is wrong with you?

MARTIN [*weeping*]. I can't bear to see . . . somebody crying—

BALLA. I hope the display will be beautiful this season. After all, we have no window dresser with better taste than Mr. Misch, and as I see, Miss Louise will also throw the valuable aid of her tender feminine hands into the balance.

MISCH. She will throw them into the balance.

BALLA *Au revoir*, Miss Louise. *Au revoir*, Mr. Misch.

LOUISE. *Au revoir.*

MISCH. The pleasure was mine.

MARTIN [*to himself*]. That poor bearded man!

[*The procession goes out left.*]

ELVIRA. Bye-bye, my Louise.

LOUISE. Bye-bye.

[*ELVIRA starts out right.*]

MISCH. What about me? Why don't you say good-bye to me, too?

ELVIRA. Because you were rude to me.

MISCH. I'll never do it again. You ought to know that I respect you most in this whole department.

ELVIRA. In other words, you keep on being rude.

LOUISE. Come, leave him.

[*Goes out right with her.*]

MARTIN [*to himself*]. He is jealous of his sweetheart!

[*He also goes out right. Only CIBULKA remains, as though she had managed to stay behind by accident. She gazes at MISCH, who is standing on the right.*]

MISCH. And you, why don't you go? What do you want?

CIBULKA. Nothing. I am admiring you.*

MISCH. Why?

CIBULKA. Because I love you.

MISCH. I told you only the other day, that you are not to get so familiar with me.†

CIBULKA. I will keep on being familiar, even if you kill me. I have nothing else but this little familiarity. This you can't take away from me.‡

MISCH. Wipe your nose.

CIBULKA. For you I'll do even that, you killjoy. [*Does it.*] The

more cynical you are toward me, the more I desire you.

MISCH. Well, now run along nicely.

CIBULKA. Is it a hopeless matter?

MISCH. Oh, yes.

CIBULKA. And when you break with Louise on account of Casella?

MISCH. Then Elvira comes.

CIBULKA. And will you reserve the third place for me?

MISCH. If you will always carefully wipe your nose.

CIBULKA. I'll wipe it continually! And I'll love you continually. You are my ideal. Don't think it's because you are handsome. Simply, one must go through it with you.

MISCH. You don't say!

CIBULKA. It is only through you that one can hope for a career.

MISCH. You wild flower.

CIBULKA. You are a splendid picker of women. Any man is happy to accept the woman whom you have discovered.

MISCH. In other words, I am to discover you.

CIBULKA. Yes. You are Moses who leads a woman into the Land of Promise.

MISCH. And I personally do not enter with her.

CIBULKA. Quite so. Look at Louise.

MISCH. Why should I look at her?

CIBULKA. Well, wasn't it you who discovered her? And to-day Casella asked for her left hand.

MISCH. You'll catch it in a minute.

* In the conversation that follows, CIBULKA uses the familiar form of address, approximated by the English "thou" as contrasted to "you," and paralleling the distinction between the German "du" and "sie." The girl's social position would forbid such familiarity toward a superior in her place of employment.

† Literally: "that you are not to say 'thou' to me."

‡ Literally: "I will keep on saying 'thou,' etc., and 'I have nothing else but this little thou-ing.'"

CIBULKA. No use. You are Moses. [*Enthusiastically.*] Moses! Moses!

MISCH. Your grandfather is Moses!

[*Shout off stage: "Cibulka."*]

CIBULKA. I'm coming! [*Runs out left, shouts back.*] I adore you, Moses!

MISCH [*to MARTIN, who sneaks in and is now busy with the props.*] You hear? I am Moses.

MARTIN. That isn't such an awful insult. He was a famous man. The boss of the Israelites.

[*MISCH goes from dress to dress with his notebook, comparing the numbers. Enter LOUISE.*]

LOUISE. Why must I always be the one to cheer up Elvira when you insult her? [*To MARTIN, pointing a bit of property.*] What is this blue canvas?

MARTIN. This is the ocean, kissing your hand.

LOUISE. I've never seen the ocean.

MISCH [*in the midst of his work.*] You will yet. Sooner than I. You Pompadour.

LOUISE. What am I?

MISCH. Everybody is flattering you. Disgusting. For the last hour you've been the queen here. And I am the what-you-may-call-it—I don't know what Pompadour's husband was called. But he played a rotten part, that's certain.

MARTIN. And this is the blue sky, little darling, kissing your hand.

LOUISE. And the clouds?

MARTIN. There are none on it, begging your pardon. There are no clouds over there, pretty little lady.

LOUISE. Have you ever been there?

MARTIN. No, begging your par-

don. But every year I set up this scenery. This is a palm, begging your pardon.

MISCH. He is the most impudent swine in the whole store. And now he sings like a nightingale. Casella affair!

LOUISE. Tell me, dear Martin, is that also a palm?

MISCH. You'll sit under one of those sooner than I.

LOUISE. That will be beautiful. I've never seen the window like this. Last year at this time I hadn't come here yet.

MISCH [*while working*]. Madame Pompadour!

LOUISE [*with a happy smile, watching the scenery showing the landscape*]. Riviera!

MISCH. The cheap Central European goal of happiness.

LOUISE. For me, working in the basement, by lamplight even in daytime, this is a great thing. And what life must be like in a place where the world is so beautiful!

MISCH. Are you saying this to get a rise out of me?

LOUISE. No. I mean it.

MISCH. So much the worse for me. The devil take this show window wherever he wants to—with all its props.

LOUISE. What's the difference? To-morrow I'd have seen it anyway.

MISCH. But not after such preliminaries. [*In despair, suddenly.*] You know what? I'll get a job as a clerk in a store in Nice. Are you coming with me?

LOUISE. Go to Nice as a proprietor. Then I'll go with you.

MISCH. You are right. [*To MARTIN, pointing to a large box.*] What is that?

MARTIN [*opening the box*]. Doo-dabs for the men figures.

LOUISE [*looks into box, puts her hand in*]. Oh, what handsome things! A red Morocco wallet! [*Smells it.*] What a good leather smell it has! They take money out of this with such elegant gestures.

[*Illustrates.*]

MARTIN. That is not the way they do it. Please give it to me. [*Takes it.*] They pay so. [*Indicates.*] Here, Martin—a nice tip for you!

LOUISE. And mufflers! Fine soft mufflers! [*Puts one around her neck.*] They wear them this way!

MARTIN [*takes out another muffler*]. I wear it this way! [*Ties it ridiculously.*] It is very chic like this. [*Goes up among the dolls.*] It is handsome, isn't it—chic, in the Riviera style?

LOUISE. Patent leather pumps! And these are the gloves! Hat! Which one's is this?

[*Hat in hand, looks at the figures.*]

MISCH [*losing his patience, snatches the hat from her hand, slams it down. Furiously*]. If you don't quit this right now, I'll go up there and break every one of them to pieces!

[*With raised fist, rushes toward the Casella figure. LOUISE and MARTIN cry out in alarm. They make a movement toward MISCH. Just now they are all standing in the show window and for a moment it is as though they themselves were wax figures again.*

CASELLA, in evening clothes, enters. CASELLA is thirty-five years old, but seems to be younger. He is very correctly attired. The expression of his

lips is somewhat bitter. His manner excellent—modest, but energetic. An intelligent, cultivated mind. More complicated and more sensitive than one would be led to believe on superficial acquaintance. This, however, he attempts to conceal in business life. During the conversation something occasionally flashes through his face and into his glance which indicates much temperament, power, and that he would perhaps stop at nothing short of cruelty. Every one becomes frightened; even MISCH is confused. He lets his arm fall.]

CASELLA. Hello, Misch.

[*LOUISE and MARTIN bow.*]

CASELLA [*to LOUISE*]. I kiss your hand. [*To MISCH.*] Hello. [*Offers his hand.*] Are you still angry with me?

MISCH [*very confused*]. Good evening.

[*Accepts his hand.*]

CASELLA. Tell me, please, what are you trying to break? [*To LOUISE.*] He was just about to break something, wasn't he?

LOUISE [*very much embarrassed*]. I think so.

CASELLA [*smiling*]. Misch, I am happy to see you. Ten years ago you were angry with me. Now I am in a position where I can make good all the errors of my youth. Forgive me.

[*Offers his hand.*]

LOUISE. Oh, that was so long ago.

MISCH. Very well!

[*Gives him his hand.*]

CASELLA. Now tell me, what was

it that you were trying to break?

MISCH. Nothing.

CASELLA [*steps up to the show window*]. Not me, I hope? Can you imagine their putting me in all the windows? The tender solicitude of the director. Tasteless chump. I saw them for the first time to-day. You are right. But I have already given orders concerning them.

LOUISE. Are you having them thrown out?

[*All through this LOUISE is quite embarrassed — admires the great man, has vague hopes, is afraid of him, smiles, is confused. She speaks to him as a school child would to the teacher.*]

CASELLA. Not that. It would be a waste. Such dolls cost a great deal nowadays. But he is going to get a long black beard.

MISCH. A pity.

CASELLA. The old Misch! sudden anger, but after that quick and wise change of mind. You're just the way you always were. I am happy to see you again. Why are you so gloomy?

LOUISE [*modestly*]. He hates being stared at.

MISCH. I have changed a great deal.

CASELLA. Not so very much. [*Looks at him.*] I am confused just now. I liked you a great deal, Misch. Do you know why I went to America? Because you got angry with me. I could no longer find my place. By now I am grateful to you, though since then . . . I have hardened. But now, under the crust, I am touched, Misch. I draw this conclusion from the fact that I talk so

much. It seems I still like you, Misch. I didn't know that. Nor am I very glad because of it. Such things disturb me. For instance—I couldn't rest since I found out that you were here. I went home only to change my clothes. It's too bad that you wanted to break me to pieces. But you are coming with me to-day. Both of you are coming with me. The young lady, I hope, has given you the invitation? I got acquainted with the young lady; that you know, don't you?

MARTIN [*softly*]. Of course!

MISCH. Yes. [*To MARTIN.*] Martin, go down to the main floor and see whether I am there. If I am not there, it's all right. If I am, send me up here and you stay down there.

[*MARTIN, shamed, slinks away.*]

CASELLA. I am happy that she is so young, beautiful and yours. Both of you are coming with me. [*Short pause.*] Well? Silence?

[*MISCH is busy arranging things on the counter right.*]

LOUISE [*timidly*]. He has night work to do.

CASELLA. He has no more work to do here. I am offering him the sphere of activity and the income he merits. I have three plans ready for him. This whole thing is so tedious. For the last hour the only thing that has excited me has been the future in store for you. I don't like to think that you have this effect on me.

MISCH. Thank you, but I am retaining this same position.

CASELLA. You are jesting.

MISCH. No, I am serious.

CASELLA. Then it's stubbornness. Misch-like stubbornness, and, I hope, a wise change of mind afterwards.

MISCH. That's a mistake.

CASELLA. Who's mistaken?

MISCH. Whoever believes that this is stubbornness.

CASELLA. But who's mistaken, you or I?

MISCH. Why this question?

CASELLA. To hear whether you still address me as a friend. That's why I ask.*

MISCH. This is all very childish.

CASELLA. Why don't you address me as a friend, as in the old days? †

MISCH. Never mind that now. ‡

CASELLA. You are looking at me very darkly. You are no longer angry about that old affair, I presume. You are angry because I have become your employer, or because I live in this world.

MISCH [*busily arranging things*]. I am not angry. I am just modest.

CASELLA. You are very gloomy, but that is understandable. Come now, your impressions of me will improve over a white table, with a glass of wine. The three of us will go to supper. And from there to the Opera Ball. Well?

[*Misch does not answer, still busy.*]

LOUISE. He does not answer.

MISCH. You need not speak in my place. I am not quite so upset as all that. I am well able to answer for myself. Thank you very much, but I am not going.

CASELLA. Then not to the Opera Ball. I can easily forego that. Let us be sentimental. Let us go down to the little old tavern, to Adolph's,

to eat through the short menu. We ate lots of dark-pedigreed meat there. Do you remember?

MISCH. There I will not go.

CASELLA. Why?

MISCH. Because that is not being sentimental for me. I still go there, every day.

CASELLA. All these ten years?

MISCH. For ten years.

CASELLA. With whom did you go there in those days?

MISCH. Two of us used to go there.

CASELLA. Two of you? But with whom did you go?

MISCH. Well, with a friend! **

CASELLA [*swooping down on him*]. Well, at last! You have come out with the word, at last. It was difficult enough to get it out of you. And now stop being such a grouch. Come, come anywhere, then, you two, only do come. Or are you ashamed to go with me?

LOUISE. Oh!

[*Laughs.*]

CASELLA. This is not a joke. I really have a very bad reputation. It goes with my career. Four or five newspapers make a splendid living out of abusing me. Another four or five make a still better living out of keeping still about me. [*Very long, almost painful pause.*] Interesting. This conversation is getting along at a painful enough rate. [*Pause.*] And all this I visualized in such a light conversational manner. But here I am, conversing all alone. No one is helping. Ask me something at least. Come!

* Literally " . . . whether you say 'you' or 'thou' to me."

† Literally "Why don't you still say 'thou' to me, etc.?"

‡ Up to this point, Casella has been using the familiar form of address, while Misch's answers have been so worded as to help him avoid committing himself.

** Here Misch, trapped into committing himself, has finally used the familiar form of address.

[Pause.]

MISCH. How much money have you?

CASELLA. That's a good question. I don't know. I have many assets and many debts in America. But my debts can wait. Real money, as a matter of fact, there's none. Only banks. Well, continue!

[Pause.]

MISCH. How many banks have you?

CASELLA. That's a still better question. So far, only two.

LOUISE. And . . .

CASELLA. And? Well? Do go on, please!

LOUISE. And how many enterprises have you?

CASELLA. Little and big, together: eighty-three. One of my banks has eleven, the other, seventy-two.

LOUISE. Staggering!

MISCH. That's not staggering. That's just very many. [Pause.] And . . .

CASELLA. And?

MISCH. And where does this department store belong? To the eleven, or to the seventy-two?

CASELLA. To the seventy-two. Why do you ask?

MISCH [to LOUISE]. That you might stagger even more and see what an insignificant little speck I am.

[Pause.]

LOUISE. And . . .

CASELLA. Well? Come on! And? Just be brave! And?

LOUISE. And do you direct all those things yourself?

CASELLA. At present, yes. But I am willing to turn fifty of them over to him.

LOUISE. Are you being serious?

CASELLA. If that's not enough, sixty.

[Pause.]

LOUISE AND MISCH [together]. And? . . .

CASELLA [happily]. And? Well?

MISCH. And you still have time to go to the Opera Ball?

CASELLA. This afternoon at six I began my vacation. I put down the telephone as a workman puts down the hammer. For two weeks I am going to cut out everything. Tomorrow I am going down south. I have worked myself to death. Also, I have a little sorrow. That, too, I want to get out of me.

MISCH. You—sorrow?

CASELLA. Just so—sorrow.

MISCH. Business sorrow.

CASELLA. No. [To LOUISE.] You will guess it.

LOUISE [timidly, but smiling]. Woman.

CASELLA. Didn't I tell you? That's it. At least, that's what it was. I was careless. But it's my conviction that sorrows are cured by money just as is incipient tuberculosis. I must go in for intensive traveling, I must live an entertaining life, sleep, if necessary, with the aid of sleeping powders, but sleep. And Coué! That's the main thing! Coué!

LOUISE. What is that?

CASELLA. Aren't you acquainted with it? Coué's method? Wonderful! A method of auto-suggestion. A method of self-persuasion. One repeats a sentence, that isn't true at all, loudly, mechanically, until it becomes true. For instance, a man with whom things are going badly, must repeat mechanically, loudly, even ten thousand times a day: "Day by day, in every way, things are get-

ting better and better. . . . Day by day, in every way, things are getting better and better . . ." until finally . . . things *are* getting better.

LOUISE [*laughing*]. Interesting.

CASELLA. Just try it sometimes, when your head aches. In ten minutes it will go away.

LOUISE. Queer. And now . . . what sort of sentence do you keep on repeating nowadays?

CASELLA. Now I say . . . [*Mechanically rattles.*] . . . "I have no sorrow. I have no sorrow, I have no sorrow . . ." and already I feel that . . . I *have* no sorrow!

LOUISE. How queer!

CASELLA. Now all I need is a little water cure in addition, and in that way I estimate two weeks for my sorrow. Any one with whom it lasts longer, is not a respectable man. He is a poet.

[*Pause.*]

LOUISE. Was she a pretty woman?

CASELLA. Brainy, rather. She helped me a great deal. Well, it doesn't matter. To-morrow, Nice, sobering, and then, after all the temporary affairs, at last a permanent woman, and at last, at last one for whom it will be worth while to fight, to work, to . . . to whom it will seem natural that I am her all . . . some serene, moneyless, quite simple, faithful, calm little body. [*To LOUISE.*] This, too, you will understand better.

LOUISE [*with enthusiasm*]. Oh, I understand!

[*Looks at him adoringly. A moment's pause. Misch turns on his heels and goes out left.*]

CASELLA [*surprised*]. Why did he go out?

LOUISE. I don't know.

CASELLA. He turned without a word, and went out. Is it because of what I said?

LOUISE. Possibly.

CASELLA. But what is he thinking now?

LOUISE. I don't know.

CASELLA. I hope he doesn't think that— But that would be extremely painful—if he were to think that I addressed all this to you. I want what I want, but I usually do not make such mistakes. Queer boy. He is like a savage child. He is sensitive about this new situation, it seems. Is it possible that he got angry?

LOUISE. Oh, yes.

CASELLA. You told him that I invited you to dinner?

LOUISE. Oughtn't I to have?

CASELLA. So that's it! That's different. But I hope you told him as well that when I learned you were his, no longer did I with a single word—

LOUISE. Of course, naturally.

CASELLA. Now I can understand very many things. But I am surprised that he thinks that of me. Am I a thief? Why do you smile? Does he consider me a thief?

LOUISE. I think so.

CASELLA. Perhaps you do, too?

LOUISE. A little.

CASELLA. No, my dear, I do not rob people. On the Exchange, I take money. Even that, with gloves. But rob people? Never. Neither men, nor women. What am I to do? I liked you very much this afternoon. Very much. In a moment I made my plans. Then it developed that you were another's. And his, of all people. It was good that I wasn't completely carried away. It was easy to put on the brakes and stop. Well,

it doesn't matter. [*After a short pause.*] Are your parents alive?

LOUISE. Yes. One of my grandmothers is alive, too.

CASELLA. Do you help them?

LOUISE. I give them everything I earn.

CASELLA. Where do you live? [*LOUISE gazes on the floor.*] Why don't you answer? Where do they live?

LOUISE. In an attic—in a store-room.

CASELLA. This afternoon you said that your father is a breeder of animals.

LOUISE. Yes. I said that in my embarrassment. My father is a newspaper vendor at night. But we live rent-free in the attic-room because the landlord's child is sick and must drink goat's milk and there are two goats living in the attic with us, and they are in my father's care.

CASELLA. In other words, those are the ones he breeds.

LOUISE. He takes care of them. Really he is . . . rather . . . a shepherd. In spite of everything, there is something beautiful even in that. When the goat stands out there on the window sill, he looks at the many roofs. Then he is restless and has longings, because he thinks they are all mountains. He would like to jump about on them. He has to be held back by force.

CASELLA. And that is where you live.

LOUISE. Here . . . and there.

CASELLA. On nights like this, where do you usually go?

LOUISE. To supper at Adolph's.

CASELLA. What about concerts, the theatre?

LOUISE. Never.

CASELLA. Don't you like them?

LOUISE. I adore them. But how can I go to them? Although I'm dying for music. . . .

CASELLA. So you never get any finer pleasures, intellectual excitement . . . nothing?

LOUISE. Yes, I do get something like that. I have a touch of pulmonary catarrh, and because of it, I occasionally have a very slight fever. I can't quite describe how pleasant that is. All languid, beautiful thoughts. As though some happiness kept on murmuring in one's ears; phantasies, a little fiery excitement, enchantment, heat . . . my cheeks are so red and there is such fever in me. Poor people also have their pleasures, if you please.

CASELLA. In view of these things . . . would I be a thief . . . if I took you away from all this?

LOUISE. It would hurt him greatly.

CASELLA. But has he the right to keep you in a prison? Doesn't he think of that?

LOUISE. I'd not be able to stand it if I knew that he was suffering.

CASELLA. The man suffers only when the woman is stupid and makes the break prolonged. With clever women, the combat of parting begins with the *coup de grâce*. And there is nothing further.

LOUISE [*with enthusiastic conviction*]. I am always saying just that. If one has to go, one should go suddenly, without a word. One ought not to torture the other. [*Frightened at what she has said.*] That is—those that do want to get away. I don't.

CASELLA. Never?

LOUISE [*after not answering for a*

long while]. Tell me. Did yours leave in so sensible a manner?

CASELLA. Yes.

LOUISE. And . . . didn't it hurt?

CASELLA. Even the heart is appreciative of the practical. It heals faster if it feels that it's not worth while to ache. [*LOUISE looks down on the ground.*] Well, it doesn't matter. The main thing is that I already have my apartment in Nice. One drawing room, two bedrooms.

LOUISE. The other one . . . for whom?

CASELLA. This morning I didn't know yet. At half past six this afternoon I knew. Now again I don't know. [*LOUISE looks down, embarrassed. To his own wax image.*] Don't laugh! [*To LOUISE.*] He doesn't recognize me. This Misch person irritates me. What a primitive sort of thing, to accuse me of—

[*MISCH enters, hat in hand, overcoat on his arm.*]

MISCH. Why don't you continue it? *

CASELLA [*nervously*]. Of course, I'm going to continue it. I said, you accuse me of giving hints to this young lady, in front of you.

MISCH. I did not betray that with a single word.

[*Puts his things on the counter.*]

CASELLA. But you turned on your heels and went out after a sentence of mine that . . .

MISCH. I have been for my things. And I am nervous—forgive me. I've had a bad day. And this meeting has upset me. Forgive me.

CASELLA. I? You forgive me for having burst in on you. But only for that. Because I stick to the fact that since this charming creature spoke

your name down there by the gloves, I have acted most correctly.

MISCH. In that case then, if you don't mind, I should like to ask that we drop this matter.

CASELLA. I have no objections. Then you two are not coming with me?

MISCH. We can't go.

CASELLA. But some time we'll have to talk of . . . real things.

MISCH. When you've come back from your vacation. [*Takes his things.*] We'll go down to the store now, buy some assorted delicatessen food and eat it up here while working. She will help me.

[*Industriously, impatiently, exaggeratedly brushes his hat.*]

CASELLA. And how long are you going to remain here?

MISCH. Until dawn.

CASELLA. Well, I'll come back here from the Opera Ball. By that time you'll be in better humor, perhaps. But I will not leave town without having raised you to an important position. If it can't be done smoothly, I'll use force.

MISCH. I cannot be given presents.

[*Furiously keeps on brushing his hat.*]

CASELLA. You may always trust a bank director to make a gift so that even the person involved does not notice it. [*To LOUISE.*] A difficult fellow!

LOUISE. He's always been like this. He has a strong character, but a big heart.

[*Becomes maudlin.*]

MISCH. Such character sketches . . . [*In confusion.*] . . . are not called for, especially from you . . .

* This is already in the familiar "thou."

CASELLA. How old are you, Misch?

MISCH. I am a salesman. Isn't that enough?

LOUISE. He has just written a play.

CASELLA. You are not quite well, Misch. But you seem to be happy enough. It seems to me, you are in love with each other.

[*Silence.*]

MISCH. She . . . loves no one.

[*Brushes furiously.*]

CASELLA. Doesn't she know how?

MISCH. Oh, she knows. She loves her life. She is used to saying: life is progress. And progress is always something more than we have.

CASELLA. Bravo!

LOUISE. This is a mania with him. I don't even understand what he is saying.

MISCH. That isn't necessary. You don't understand it, but you live it.

LOUISE. What am I to do with you, when you are so clever?

[*MISCH is now brushing hat so significantly, that his impatience cannot be misunderstood.*]

CASELLA [*breaking into a smile*]. All right, all right. Good night, you two. *Au revoir*. I'll come up late to-night, before going home, to talk sense to you. I'll not leave town without that.

[*Short pause. CASELLA is watching MISCH, who has by now brushed his hat and is nervously tapping the hat against his knee, as though saying: "Go on, hurry!" CASELLA suddenly starts out, left. Mechanically keeps on repeating, always louder: "He was very*

charming to me, he was very charming to me, he was very charming to me . . ." and so on, until he has left. *He keeps saying it even outside, behind the scenes. Pause.*

LOUISE *looks after him.*]

MISCH. Well, are we going?

LOUISE. Yes.

MISCH. What are you looking at him for? Well, yes, he was here in person. He himself. And now he has gone away. To the Opera Ball. In a dress suit. Chandeliers, velvets, music, lights, food, drinks, laughter, dancing, women! Women! He will pick to-night . . . a traveling companion. He will pick some one instead of you.

LOUISE. What do you want of me?

MISCH. He will take some one else to the seashore instead of you.

LOUISE. A lot I care!

MISCH. But you do care. And I am the cause of it. And now you will be angry with me.

LOUISE. It is always myself only that makes me angry!

MISCH. Now, too?

LOUISE. Yes.

MISCH. Why didn't you go with him immediately?

LOUISE. You are a fool. Why did you run out of here so noticeably, just before?

MISCH. I couldn't stand his voice.

LOUISE. He acted altogether correctly. That's why you became so mild.

MISCH. He was slimy, like a snake.

LOUISE. You see, you didn't slap his face, after all.

MISCH. What? Are you trying to irritate me?

LOUISE. No, I am merely happy that you could be so wise. I always get frightened of you, but now I am beginning to realize that your heart is good, only your mouth keeps on going.

MISCH. Long ago . . . ten years ago, in the little tavern, at Adolph's, when we used to make plans, we always thought: together we would start some large concern. In advance we kept on mentioning its name: "Misch and Casella." Now at last the firm exists. We can inscribe that over your heart— I am going to get drunk to-night. Come. We'll buy tuna-fish and cheese. And good strong wine. And whisky. Excellent whisky, full of fire, strong. Will you drink with me?

LOUISE. Yes.

MISCH. Much?

LOUISE. Yes.

MISCH. To forget?

LOUISE. I? What am I to forget?

MISCH. I . . . am going to forget you. I'll forget you in advance. We'll get very drunk. All right?

LOUISE [*motherly*]. Yes, my dear!

MISCH. We'll turn this big building upside down.

LOUISE. Yes, darling.

MISCH. Tell me, if you were to leave this poor Misch, with his graying hair . . . wouldn't that hurt you?

LOUISE. Terribly.

MISCH. Then why are you leaving me?

LOUISE. I don't know.

MISCH. In other words, you are leaving me?

LOUISE. Of course I'm not.

MISCH. You'll stay with me.

LOUISE. Yes.

MISCH. Why will you not stay with me?

LOUISE. Leave me alone.

MISCH. Do you love me?

LOUISE. Yes.

MISCH. How?

LOUISE. Just now . . . as I love my mother.

[*MARTIN enters right.*]

MISCH. Martin, old usurer, have you any money?

MARTIN. For Mr. Misch I always have money.

MISCH [*looks at his money*]. I have some small change. And a lucky dollar. I shouldn't like to change that. But I'd like to buy some good whisky.

MARTIN. For whisky, I'll give you money with special pleasure. Will twenty be enough?

[*Hands the money to him.*]

MISCH. Of course. Thank you. Don't be ashamed of it, Louise. After all, you did hear that even Casella owes money in America!

MARTIN [*writing in his notebook*]. Used to be a hundred and twenty—now twenty—that makes a hundred and forty.

MISCH. Let us say: a hundred and fifty.

MARTIN. Let us say: a hundred and fifty.

[*Makes the corrections.*]

MISCH. We'll be back in ten minutes, we are just going down to the store for some supper. [*MARTIN helps him with his coat.*] In the meantime, empty this show case and undress these six dolls. [*Pushes the goods away from the end of the counter.*] Leave this space free, because here's where we'll have supper.

MARTIN. Yes, sir, Mr. Misch.
 [MISCH and LOUISE descend on elevator, left. MARTIN goes up among the figures.] Kissing your hand, Mr. President. [Kisses the Casella-doll's hand.] Please come along, Your Excellency! [Carries a female figure down in front of the window. Begins to undress it.] Do not resent it, but now you must get undressed. [Holds his ear to the doll's mouth.] I don't think so. It is cold, but you'll not catch cold. [Listens.] Oh, nonsense—in front of me? But I'm an old man! [Listens.] Well, of course, a male, but a very calm male, really. [Listens.] I'm sorry, there is no mercy. Whoever is unable to

undress by herself, gets undressed. Mustn't be sorry about the pretty dress, because we'll be getting a still prettier one, you bet! Now, mustn't act stubborn. So; that's right. So. Oh, yes . . . now we'll take off this little dress, because we are getting a gorgeous new little dress instead. Just no shame, Your Excellency. Off with the little dress! [Unfastens the shoulder of the dress and slowly lets the dress down, off the doll.] And now nothing will remain on the little body. One, two, three.

[Laughs mischievously. At this moment]

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

[SCENE: Same as Act One.

AT RISE: It is well after midnight. The front end of the left counter is set for a meal. Remains of food; a few wine and whisky bottles. MISCH and LOUISE are sitting opposite each other, on the right and left of the counter's end. They are still nibbling fruit. They drink. MARTIN is slowly fussing with the dolls. The figures are sitting in a row in front of the show case, only JERITZA and ROCKEFELLER are standing. The dolls have their profiles toward the audience as they sit, from left to right, as though they were all looking into the boxes on the right. Their attire has been changed and they sit in the following order, from left to right: (1) CASELLA, in a dress suit; (2) the RUSSIAN PRINCESS, in a grand evening dress; (3) ROCKEFELLER, in a very stylish white suit for day wear; (4) JERITZA, in a morning dress, with parasol; (5) FORD, in a dinner jacket; (6) the

FRENCH COUNTESS, again in a grand evening dress. The old dresses lie on the two counters. The evening dresses that had been brought in the boxes are on the right counter. The show window is completely empty and dark. The old decorations and furniture of the salon have already gone. The Riviera props, furniture and flowers, palms, etc., are waiting in the right corner in a heap. The small hand-cart is standing in the back, between the left counter and the glass case. There are two low wooden boxes on it.

MISCH and LOUISE are definitely drunk. MARTIN is normally drunk, as always.

A phonograph is going.]

LOUISE [giggling]. Seventy-two enterprises . . . eighty-two enterprises . . .

MISCH. Seventy-two. Pack of

thieves! Stop that phonograph, I can't hear my own voice.

MARTIN. I thought Mr. Misch would enjoy the surprise. I dragged it up from the ground floor.

LOUISE. Let it go, I enjoy that little music so much.

MISCH. Are you drunk?

LOUISE. Yes. I am light. I am flying a little. But halfway I am on earth. Like when a flying machine starts off on the field.

MISCH. Let's go higher. To the clouds! [*Pours wine.*] Higher.

[*Drinks.*]

MARTIN [*goes up, with glass in hand*]. Let me also fly with Your Worships!

[*Clicks glasses with them.*

Starts to parade up and down among the dolls.]

MISCH. All the way up to the stars! [*Drinks.*] This is the way I say farewell to you!

LOUISE. Not farewell! I won't stand for your saying that!

MISCH. But it's that exactly. Farewell supper. Twice already I've found tears in my eyes. Now again I'm seeing things dimly.

MARTIN. You are pleased to be having too much diversion. What about that work? It's already dawning; let us do the window, it'll soon be morning.

MISCH. What do you want? We have dressed the company, that was the hardest. The rest is just play. Why don't you drink?

[*Pours drink for him.*]

MARTIN. I am drinking. Don't worry about me. I am drinking calmly. For me this is not a holiday like it is for Mr. Misch. [*Drinks.*] To the beautiful lady's health! I, poor slave!

MISCH. We are both of us slaves, Martin. Only I am more handsome than you are.

MARTIN. That could be argued.

MISCH. But we are dogs, just the same. You are a mongrel and I a silken Pomeranian. Whoever works, is a dog.

MARTIN. Whoever has money, is a man.

LOUISE. Socialists! I don't like this.

MARTIN. The pretty lady is also a worker.

LOUISE. I am not a socialist. The organizers have called me many times. While I remain pretty and young, I am going to be a capitalist. Once I get homely and old, I'll let myself be organized.

MARTIN. How can you talk like that?

LOUISE. If you'd only not bother about farewells!

MISCH. Aren't you going to kiss me?

LOUISE. Of course I will.

[*Long kiss. MISCH, after the kiss, passes in front of the dolls, all the way to the right end of the row.*]

LOUISE [*sits down before the counter*]. I am as light as a feather. I am as sweet as sugar inside. Oh, you dear music! [*Shouting, to MISCH.*] Don't go away from me!

MISCH [*at the right end near dolls*]. I must see whether they're all in order.

[*MARTIN picks up the Casella figure, together with its chair, and places it next to LOUISE.*]

MISCH. Why are you taking it away from there?

MARTIN. Mr. President sits here.

Next to the pretty lady, whom he loves.

[*Stands behind doll, grinning.*]

MISCH. Old procurer! What are you doing? Bring it back instantly.

[*MARTIN wants to take the doll.*]

LOUISE. You aren't going to take it. It stays here. [*She takes the doll's hand.*] Good evening, dear Mr. President.

MISCH [*to MARTIN*]. You'd better be paying attention to this. Look what you did here. Her Excellency's stockings are wrinkled. What sort of thing do you call this? She can't sit in the window like that. [*Kneels before the doll, adjusts stockings.*] This must be tight. Say, stop that phonograph or I'll kill you.

[*MARTIN goes out up stage left.*]

The phonograph stops. MARTIN comes back.

LOUISE [*during this, to the Casella figure*]. Mr. President, I see that you haven't yet had a dance at the Opera Ball. Your things are still so neat.

MISCH [*to the woman figure*]. Your Excellency will forgive me for daring to reach above your knee. [*Does so.*] But you really can't sit in the window looking like this.

LOUISE. I must congratulate you, Mr. President, upon your new dress suit.

[*Laughs*].

MISCH [*rises*]. And, if you please, your shoulder should be a bit less covered. More nudity. [*Adjusting it.*] Do not forget that the window is going to represent a seashore resort. You go there to capitivate, because you are immoral and do not earn your bread by work, as I do, but with your body.

[*LOUISE laughs aloud.*]

MISCH. Don't laugh. Cry!

LOUISE. I won't cry. I feel wonderfully well. [*Holds the Casella figure's hand.*] Why should I cry?

[*Bends her head on the Casella figure's shoulder.*]

MISCH. Because you have made me unhappy. Don't bend your head on his shoulder, do not long for him, you'll get him anyway—already you are his.

LOUISE. Leave me alone; what do you want?

MISCH. Don't flirt with him.

LOUISE. You are a fool. [*Laughs.*] My head is so heavy now, I am dreaming of life. Oh, Misch! I won't become an old woman. I have but two or three years more. [*Whispering, to the doll.*] Take me away from here.

MISCH [*to MARTIN*]. You see? So oughtn't a man to break him?

MARTIN. Where would that get us?

LOUISE [*cuddling up to the Casella figure*]. Don't let me go. This man wants to drag me back into the cellar. I want the sun! I have pulmonary catarrh! I want air, I want flowers.

MISCH. Just keep on talking! Out with it, at last! So you do not love me! You are going with him!

LOUISE [*to the Casella figure*]. I'll tell you the truth—I do not love even you, no, no . . . really . . . I love that other one, that poor boy. I can't help it. Take me away from here! Save me! A fur coat for my father in winter! Have me educated! I want to play the piano! I want to learn English. I want to be cultured. Show me how to eat, where to live.

MISCH. Where to live? Hotel de Paris, Hotel de Baccarat, Hotel de Sunray, Palace de Homard, Hotel

de Mayonnaise, Hotel de Million!

LOUISE. He doesn't know! How should he know these things, poor fellow! How!

MISCH [*to a doll*]. You! Tell that thieving banker to say to that poor dazed girl that I know these things from prospectuses, bills of fare, advertisements, placards, newspapers; because of poverty, hatred, envy and longing I know them, therefore I know them better than the Duke of Orleans, for he knows these things merely because of boredom. Tell her, you rich blackguard, that I am ragged, but I know better . . . I know it best!

LOUISE [*to the Casella figure, in triumph*]. You are not ragged! Your dress suit is marvelous. Now I am playing with a doll. In my childhood I had none, anyway! What a beautiful doll! What a good doll!

MISCH. Enough!

LOUISE [*shouting*]. Not enough!

MISCH [*leaps toward her*]. I won't stand for it!

LOUISE. You have no rights. No rights at all.

MISCH. I won't stand for it. Go away from him!

LOUISE. The man is drunk! [*Drunk, shouting*]. You have nothing to do with me! Are you jealous? What do you want? You yourself said that it would be like this. You said that you wouldn't be able to prevent it. You said that you hadn't the strength.

MISCH. I have no strength? Now I am drunk, now I have strength. I have strength for everything! Get away from him!

LOUISE. I won't go. This is not a man. This is a doll, you donkey!

MISCH. Go away from there or I'll do something that . . .

LOUISE [*screaming*]. I won't go!

MISCH. Just you wait! [*Dashes over*.] Then I've got to use another language with you.

LOUISE [*screams and jumps away from the doll*]. He is crazy!

MISCH [*to the Casella figure*]. If she won't go . . . then *you* must leave my mistress. Beat it, thief! You won't? [*To MARTIN, who is hanging on to his arm*.] Leave me alone! [*Thrusts him away*.] I am saying it for the last time: clear out! No? You look at me coldly? You are not afraid? Wait, then, scoundrel, now at last I'll say it to your face. Now I am not bowing, now I do not stammer, now I am not frightened, now I'll tell you who you are. You are a blackguard! You are a robber. You are a thief. You are a fence. Me, too, you cheated. You stole from me. I loathe you, hate you, detest you. I never did like you, I always shrank from you with disgust, you scoundrel, you highwayman, you bandit— Aren't you insulted? Why don't you jump up? Why don't you strike me? You sit there and grin? Then listen here. You'll stop grinning in a minute. You are a scoundrel, like all of your kind. You invite the girl to supper. But first you make me finish the heavy work. You make me pick out a girl from among the millions—get her washed, teach her—and take away her innocence. You are getting her all ready, the finished product, picked out, washed—as a calm wanton whose tears have already been dried. I have already broken her parents of the habit of expecting her home in the evenings, but I re-

ceived the slaps from her father, and it was *I* her mother tried to kill. I have already prepared her. It will no longer be your duty to marry her if she should get a child from you. Always I am making things easier for you, everywhere I smooth your path, because everything that was difficult and dirty, I suffered in your stead! You merely come, smile elegantly, get her, all ready, and take her. Is that what you think? No, you scoundrel. This time you've met your match. Now you'll have to settle accounts with me!

[*Whips out his revolver.*]

LOUISE [*screaming*]. What are you doing?

MISCH. Keep quiet! This is sentence, now, and execution. Take it, you scoundrel!

[*Empties all the bullets of the revolver into the doll. LOUISE keeps on screaming.*]

MARTIN [*frightened*]. Good God, Mr. Misch! For God's sake!

MISCH. Don't moan. [*To LOUISE.*] Not a word out of you. Now I've done it. Give me whisky! [*Drinks. Steps up to the figure.*] If you move, you die! [*To the doll, panting with excitement.*] And now . . . give me your money! [*Takes the red wallet from the doll's pocket.*] If you betray me, you all die! [*Bends toward the doll.*] Are you still living? Did you die? You don't move! Scoundrel! Give me your dress suit! [*Tears the coat off him, the vest, the necktie. His own coat he flings away. One by one he dons them—the necktie, the vest, the coat. During this:*] Now I've done it. I have murdered you and robbed you. Well, let there be a world-wide scandal, if there's one needed. I have murdered the

great Casella and robbed him! Let the stories come out in the newspapers! Well, now you see that I have strength. [*To TWO WORKMEN, who have entered right at the sound of the shots.*] What do you want? Don't move, because you'll die!

[*Points his revolver at them.*]

MARTIN. Good God, what a scandal!

[*Goes to the TWO WORKMEN, tries to calm them, mutely indicating that MISCH is drunk. The TWO WORKMEN stare at MISCH in fright.*]

LOUISE. What did you do? What are you doing?

MISCH. What am I doing? I am having my fling. I, Misch, am having my fling. I, the dog, have turned into a human being. I, the coward, have found courage. Don't gape. Drink! In this world, this is the only way I can still get money and a dress suit. Now you will come with me to the Riviera, and immediately, at that! Don't tremble! Drink! Farewell, store! We're off! [*To the workers.*] Don't gape. Drink! The slavery is ended! Now I come, Misch, newborn, in a dress suit, and I am wild! Now there will be sun, ocean, ecstasy, pleasure, concert, and mayonnaise. Now comes Count Monte Cristo, who has become rich in order to punish the evil and reward the good! Now there will be life, as much as one can wish for. High society, soulful conversation and warm food. Because one has to eat, in order to use his heart and brains to good purpose. While hungry, one can feel anger only! But now we are no longer angry with any one! We love every one! We are going! We are going! Hotel de Million,

Hotel de Billion! We'll stop there incognito. . . . The murderer and his mistress . . . incognito, in a dress suit. . . . Count Fontainebleau, Prince Marseillaise, Baron France! [To LOUISE, *who is weeping.*] Don't cry! Why are you all staring? If you betray me, you die! Don't cry. Come! Escape with me! [Seizes *her arm.*] Let us escape!

LOUISE [*in the midst of her tears; drunk*]. Where . . . darling?

MISCH. Where you were longing to go. Now I am taking you. The Riviera!

LOUISE. Really?

MISCH. Really.

LOUISE. When?

MISCH. Now! Immediately! With the first train!

LOUISE. But am I to go this way . . . like a beggar?

MISCH. Of course not! Don't mind anything! [*Leaps to right counter, rummages among the evening dresses, scattering them here and there.*] Poverty is ended! Now comes free life, adventure, and luxury. I'll show them. Hurrah for the League of Nations! Oh, you intoxicating, beautiful Liberty! Dress in gold and silk! Put this on! Or this. Here is number 4867! And 4684! Whichever you like better. [*Throws her an immense pile of glittering dresses across the stage.*] Put both of them on! Put on a hundred of them!

LOUISE [*drunk, screaming, laughing*]. Crêpe Marocain . . . the new model! Mine?

MISCH. Yours! All of them, yours!

MARTIN. Holy Lord God, what's going to happen here?

LOUISE [*hastily selecting*]. This

flowered one! No, this one with the gold braid! Or this lace one! Embroidery! No! Yes! Oh! Shall I go home? Where shall I take them? Where shall I put them on?

MISCH. Don't go away. Don't get sober. Drink! Put them on here!

LOUISE. This lace one! Where?

MISCH. There in the corner! Immediately! Move, run! Hurry! One, two!

LOUISE [*while running out up stage left with a dress, keeps on screaming and laughing*]. This one? With the lace? [*Jumps back.*] The one with the fur? [*Flings a dress away, picks up another one from the ground.*] No. The lace one, after all! This one with the gold? No. The lace one! You dear life! You precious, beautiful, sweet dresses!

[*Rushes out up stage left.*]

MISCH. Hurry! Let's go! Before the police find out!

MARTIN. But Mr. Misch, what's going to come of this?

MISCH. Keep quiet, or you die!

MARTIN. Mr. Misch, this will cause a scandal, the like of which was never seen.

MISCH. Don't talk. If you're afraid, drink. [*Goes down front left.*] And now, quickly! Forward! Hurry! Before my angel gets dressed. It must be finished! [*Commanding.*] Window display!

[*MARTIN and the Two WORKMEN wildly attack the Riviera set.*]

MISCH. Grab it! Don't be afraid of it! One, two! Riviera . . . forward!

[*MARTIN with the Two WORKMEN quickly sets the Riviera display.*]

MISCH [*giving commands during this*]. Background! Sky, without clouds. Sunshine. Sidewalls. Trees, bushes, flowers. Blue ocean. Sweet waves. Little white sails in the distance. Landscape! Palms. Flowers, flowers! Marble railing. Sunshine! The two standing figures against the railing! You beautiful Jeritza, you wonder nightingale! And that well-dressed gentleman, as he talks to her. He says to her: "I was there yesterday at the Metropolitan . . . divine artist, you sang more beautifully than ever. Honor me in my skyscraper, ten times in succession, for supper!" [*The two standing figures are in their places.*] Go on! The sitting ones. So, in order. Beautiful Russian Princess, Tatiana Semionova, Princess Woronzieff! Next to her, Ford, the automobile king. The doors of his factory spit out a hundred autos per minute! Go on! Madame La Comtesse de la Beautifull! On the side. Go on! In the distance, English battleships. Formal dinner at the Admiral's. Look here, Rockefeller, just stand there without fear, you have time to gaze. After all, your income is a billion dollars per hour. Flowers before them! Sunshine! Music! Music! An orchestra on the waves! [*To MARTIN, who has run up to the Casella figure.*] What do you want?

MARTIN. Where shall we put this?

MISCH. Leave that there! Don't you touch it! That one's dead! Brr! Let it go!

MARTIN. Huh!

[*Leaves it in disgust.*]

MISCH. Go away from it. Let us go on. Life is ours! Jump to the switch. Light! Sunshine! Riviera!

[*MARTIN switches on the electric*

lights. The Riviera flares up. A magic picture in scintillating sunshine, rich colors. The other parts of the stage are dark. Only the Riviera dazzles the eye. LOUISE appears in the darkened, up-stage, left corner. The sparkling evening dress is on her now. She is childish, drunk, happy, foolish. Keeps on giving little screams.]

LOUISE. Where are you? Look at me. You brave, murderous Count! See how beautiful I am! Are we flying?

MISCH [*goes toward her*]. Hurry. Can we go?

LOUISE. Yes. Immediately?

MISCH. Right away. Only this one sip more. Before our long journey. [*Drinks.*] And now, courage. Don't be afraid.

LOUISE. I am not afraid. I am flying. Dear, dear, handsome, wild murderer! Where are we going?

MISCH [*has drawn her to the left, where they huddle against each other. LOUISE clings to him, afraid. From out of the darkness he shows her the bright picture*]. There. Look. There it is. Pretty?

LOUISE. Wonderful! Wonderful!

MISCH. Come . . . to live!

MARTIN [*who thus far has been standing by the left counter, next to the hand-cart, now noiselessly pushes the cart forward, almost under them*]. All aboard! The express is leaving right away.

MISCH. Come quickly. We almost missed the express.

[*He helps LOUISE get in. He also sits down. They are sitting opposite each other. MISCH is facing in the direction they are to go.*]

MARTIN [*during this, to himself*]. Locomotive storing up water. [*Drinks, shouts.*] Pecel, Tatatovaros, Paris, London, Riviera, all aboard! We're off! [*Whistles.*] S-s-s-s!

[*Imitating the sound of the train, slowly begins to wheel the hand-cart. The course of the train is slowly across the stage, from left to right. During the entire journey, MARTIN keeps on slowly imitating the train, in the manner of children: "S-s-s-s." During this, LOUISE and MISCH gayly converse, naïvely impersonating the so-called "traveling public."*]

MISCH. Heavenly country. We are coming to the mountains now. Can you see the Alps?

LOUISE. Yes, I see them. Snow! Snow! There is snow on top. That one there is Mont Blanc.

MISCH. Steeples! Steeples! Do you see? That's Paris! Do you see?

LOUISE. I see. Ah, Paris! How quickly we're going!

MISCH. Well, what would you expect, on an express?

LOUISE. Did you tip the conductor?

MISCH. Not yet. Here, a million for you.

[*Hands money to MARTIN, behind.*]

LOUISE. He deserves it, because he gave us a separate compartment. Oh, how happy I am!

MARTIN [*pastes a slip on the box*]. Reserved Compartment!

MISCH. That heavy fog there is London.

LOUISE. Are we going that way, too?

MISCH. Of course. The express

reaches every spot. Look at those beautiful fields. Crops coming along nicely.

LOUISE. Aren't we going to cross any bridges?

MISCH. We are even now crossing many bridges. Forests. Gardens. Look, a waterfall!

LOUISE. Beautiful villas. This is Italy already.

MISCH. That's right. Olive trees to the right. Orange groves to the left.

MARTIN [*reaching the right side of the stage, whistles*]. Close the windows! Tunnel!

[*Pushes them off the stage. Off stage the hissing sounds are still heard. They are already seen coming back, in the rear, returning to the stage.*]

LOUISE. I can see the ocean.

MISCH. There it is! It just peeped out. Look, how the sun is shining. What fine people—sunning themselves on the shore. Get ready, my dear, we'll be there very soon.

LOUISE. The baggage? Duty?

MISCH. Don't bother about it. My valet will take care of it. My secretary, too.

MARTIN [*wheels the cart in front of the show window*]. Riviera! All out!

MISCH. At last we are here. [*They alight.*] Come, my dear—and now act very refined. [*To MARTIN.*] Our baggage to the Hotel de Million!

MARTIN [*puts food and drinks into the car and pushes it off right*]. Dining-car! Switched over to the third track!

[*Runs off right with the car.*]

MISCH [*bravely steps up on the platform, among the dolls, introduc-*

ing himself to Ford]. My name is Count Misch, adventurer. The lady, who is standing here, is my mistress. Lady's name is Mercedes. Carmen Mercedes. Not Louise. She is not a Countess as yet. For the time being, my family opposes it. But I am going to marry her. The lady longs to be among you. Will you have a little whisky? No. Aha—you are used to cocaine and morphine. Waiter, a liter of cocaine for this choice company. I'm paying for it. Sit down, Mercedes, and order whatever you want. [*As though talking to a waiter.*] What kind of caviar have you? Beluga or Malossol? Doesn't matter. Bring both of them. Mixed. And one . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five portions of mayonnaise. Ladies and gentlemen, I am a very interesting man. The newspapers write about me. Among gentlemen, I can say this—I trust to your discretion. I murdered the famous Casella. [*To FORD.*] Mr. Ford, are you not? From America? My name is Count Misch. You don't offer your hand to me? The jury will acquit me. But for this insult my seconds are going to see you to-night at the Casino. [*Turns his back on him.* LOUISE sits down next to FORD. MISCH is standing in the center, between FORD and the Russian woman. *To her.*] Princess Woronzieff, are you not? We met at the English Admiral's dinner, on His Majesty's ship. I received your scented letter. [*To LOUISE.*] What's this? You sit there, next to the man who insulted me?

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Ford. Coming from you, it was very sweet.

MISCH. What's that? Don't you even answer me?

LOUISE. Don't mind him, Mr. Ford. Don't bother with him. He is nervous whenever I say a word to any one.

MISCH. Is this solidarity? Already you are flirting with my enemy? Because he is rich? [*To the Russian woman.*] But please, but please, wait, Tatiana Semionova, don't be impatient.

LOUISE. Thank you for your question. I have not been to America as yet. My papa has no time to accompany me.

MISCH. What, you are conversing with him?

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. My father is a newspaper publisher. He has thirty newspapers.

MISCH [*to the doll*]. I am not jealous, Princess. But I must watch over her, because I want to make her my wife.

LOUISE. He lies, because he's jealous. But it is very easy to get rid of him. My father is a famous goat-hunter. When are you sailing, Mister?

MISCH. Do I seem restless? You are right, ladies. That's because I suffer so on account of Mercedes.

[*Sits down between the two dolls.*]

LOUISE. This is not the life for me. Mr. Ford will take me farther. The Riviera is monotonous. Don't you find it so, Princess? Always just ocean and sun, cards and jewelry.

MISCH. You're tired of it already? I want to pay!

LOUISE. He's taking me to Egypt. There he has pyramids and camels. Come with us, Madame Jeritza. From there we are going to Japan.

You will sing for us on the ship.

MISCH. The Riviera is no longer enough for her.

[*Laughs bitterly.*]

LOUISE. Not enough! Take me to America! We will be your guests, Mr. Rockefeller!

MISCH. Are you getting familiar with him, too?

LOUISE [*clinging to FORD*]. But it's him I love!

MISCH. Why him, and why not me?

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. Did you hear that stupid question? [*To MISCH.*] Because he takes me further on—upward.

MISCH [*shouting to the dolls*]. Ladies and gentlemen! Do you see what is happening to me here? Will you stand for that without a word? I will not stand for it. I rebel now. I am going to tell everything. Be prepared for terrible things.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. You are giving me the ship? Oh, thank you. The Captain must come to me in the morning to take my orders.

MISCH. Ladies and gentlemen! It is not worth while to murder for a woman. On my word of honor. I know.

LOUISE [*cries out wildly*]. Why do you harp on that one murder all the time? He can still boast of such a thing after a world war!

MISCH. Ladies! I am excited. And now I am going to tell everything. [*To a doll.*] Do not interrupt me, please. I discovered this woman in a dirty dressmaking shop. [*To the doll.*] Right away. Just have patience— She was going around wearing slippers. I skipped supper for five days in order to buy her winter shoes. [*To the doll.*] Do

you know what that means? You do not. [*To other doll.*] She was *this* thin, because she did not eat. I got her a position in the department store and I bought winter shoes for her father, too. I bought winter shoes for everybody.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. I've just noticed what stylish shoes you have.

MISCH. I shared my dinners and suppers with her. On account of that I lost two pounds in a week.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. You use perfume, don't you?

MISCH. I brought her two liters of milk every day.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. Not all women like perfumed men. I do.

MISCH. Ladies, all the trouble was caused by Casella, who noticed her to-day in the department store.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. We'll have breakfast in bed—together.

MISCH. This poor girl was instantly dazed, overwhelmed.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. It is in the morning that I am most charming!

MISCH. What am I to do, please? Shall I force her to remain with me in poverty? I have far more honor than that.

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. We'll have chocolate for breakfast.

MISCH. I had to act quickly. So I did act quickly. I murdered that scoundrel of a seducer and robbed him, just so that I might show this woman a life of luxury, happiness!

LOUISE [*to FORD*]. You are going to marry me!

[*Seizes the doll's arm.*]

MISCH. And now, look, do you see what she is doing?

LOUISE. Marry me! I am going crazy for want of a child! But what am I to do? Shall I give birth to it

in a hospital? Shall I bundle it in rags? Shall I place it in an asylum for foundlings? I want an English nurse for my child! Two English nurses in nice, stiff, white uniforms!

MISCH. And now look at her! Hear it!

LOUISE. Not in rags, sick! I saw a white lacquered model nursery in a department store, with white tables, glass closets. I wept all night. Snow-white enamel, metal, glass, rubber. Porcelain dishes, thermometers, sterilizers, cups, scales, bottles, spoons—like a nice, clean kitchen. A little sanitarium! I remember every piece! Pictures from fairy tales on the walls! White cradle! And that good milk smell, as the milk was boiling!

MISCH. Do you hear? Well, can I give her all that?

LOUISE [*to the FORD doll*]. And you will respect me, because I will be a decent mother and you will give us your houses and factories and every child will get a ship and a captain, and I'll get prettier and more loving after every child!

MISCH. No!!

LOUISE [*screaming, crying, laughing, shouting*]. And my mother will be a grandmother, and she'll get a little house and grandfather will get a great coat and you will buy me all California and everything will be ours—all America—and even in my dreams I will not remember those poor sales-clerks always wondering whether I am pregnant or not!

MISCH [*gets up, bellowing*]. I can't stand it! I'll die of this!

LOUISE [*shouts him down*]. You'll not die of it!

MISCH [*shouting*]. I won't play any more. [*Jumps up.*] Ladies, I am not a man of the world, I am not

a Count, I am only Misch, an ageing, ragged sales-clerk! She is right! I am selfish, I am a cheat, I am a fool! I am not Count Misch! I am Count Jackass, I am Count Moses! [*Weeping, keeps on tearing off the dress coat, the vest, the necktie.*] This is not mine, nor is this mine. I stole all this, this is not I. I'm not going to play any longer! And I murdered in vain for her! And she did right in denying me. And she left me, and she was right. And she cast me off, and she was right. And, on top of that, she punishes me and there she is right, too. Do not murder for woman! Is it worth while? [*Breaking into sobs.*] Would it be worth while even if it were possible? Isn't it better that it's impossible? [*In shirt-sleeves, weeping, sits down on the right edge of the platform. Covers his face. Weeps silently. LOUISE goes down, sits next to him.*] What do you want of me?

LOUISE. I pity you, because you suffer so.

MARTIN [*sneaks in left, goes up to the murdered CASSELLA figure. Standing next to it he whispers mysteriously, making a megaphone out of his palms*]. Telegram!—"Arriving in the morning. Casella."

[*Begins to dress the CASSELLA figure, in the corner, in the suit discarded by MISCH.*]

MISCH. What are you doing? Leave that alone!

MARTIN. Why?

MISCH. Leave it, he's dead.

MARTIN. Of course he isn't dead.

MISCH. But I shot him dead.

MARTIN. Don't shout. A rich man dies when he feels like it. A couple of professors came and cured him.

[*Dresses figure.*]

MISCH. He can't come here. I killed him!

MARTIN. You did not kill him. You only emptied a few bullets into his lungs. What is that for a rich man? A matter of money!

[*During this, he keeps on dressing CASELLA.*]

LOUISE. Don't you understand? He can't die, because he has a great deal of money. The doctors, professors, all flock to him. Even those whom he had not called. They fly to him in airplanes, whole flocks, like crows on the fields. The sky is dark with the many flying professors!

MISCH. I don't want him to come here!

LOUISE. He must come here, because he is convalescing. He is coming to the Riviera, to recuperate. [*Whispering.*] He's not a human being! Just a doll!

MISCH [*crying out*]. When I killed him, he was a human being! I know! I don't want to see him!

LOUISE. Are you afraid of him?

MISCH. Yes.

LOUISE. What? You can be afraid at last? What's this?

MISCH. This is something with which you and your kind are not acquainted. Conscience. What is going to happen to me?

[*MARTIN having seated the CASELLA figure in the show window, now rolls up his own trousers.*]

LOUISE. What are you doing?

MARTIN. I am a lackey at the President's. He has hired me at last. [*Stands in front of LOUISE and bows.*] Beautiful lady, Mr. President Casella sent me. He has just arrived and wishes to see Your Ladyship. He

said you were to come immediately. He commands you.

[*LOUISE rises and starts out.*]

MARTIN, [*acting the lackey, announces her*]. The Countess Misch.

[*Bows and shows her the way to CASELLA.*]

LOUISE [*ascends the platform, sits down between the CASELLA figure and FORD. Leans her head on the doll's shoulder*]. Didn't I say that I should have left him without farewells? [*At this moment CASELLA enters left, in the back. LOUISE does not see him. Vehemently.*] I should have gone without a word, during the afternoon—the first minute!

CASELLA. Good evening, Louise!

[*LOUISE jumps up, screams.*]

MISCH [*sobs aloud*]. What humiliation!

CASELLA. Good evening. Is that you, Louise?

LOUISE. Yes.

CASELLA. What dress are you wearing?

LOUISE. A grand, evening toilette.

CASELLA. What's going on here? [*To MARTIN.*] Who is that over there?

MARTIN. Don't you recognize him?

CASELLA. He is covering his face.

MARTIN. Because he is crying. That's Mr. Misch.

CASELLA. Misch?

LOUISE. Yes.

CASELLA. Why is he crying?

LOUISE. On account of whisky.

CASELLA. Funny. I also drank, and I am laughing.

MISCH [*looks up at him, crying*]. That is why I weep, because you are laughing.

CASELLA. Forgive me, but this is comical, finding you here. Louise in

this finery, and you, the future director of my department store, half-nude, weeping. Oughtn't I to laugh at this?

LOUISE [*comes down to MISCH, patting his head*]. Don't laugh! It's easy for you to laugh at us.

CASELLA. But what is that dress you are wearing?

LOUISE [*only now awakening*]. Jesus, Maria! My dress!

[*Rushes out, up stage left.*]

MARTIN [*whispering in CASELLA'S ear, as though trying to betray everything*]. Number 6846. . . .

CASELLA. I gape, like a stranger who has just arrived. Porter, what is your name?

MARTIN. I didn't do anything, begging your pardon.

CASELLA. What is your name?

MARTIN. Martin Acs, begging your pardon.

CASELLA. Martin Acs, what's going on here?

MARTIN. Please, Mr. President, I am a little drunk.

CASELLA. Don't be uneasy, I am also drunk, but I am very drunk. [*Goes up on platform, sits down in LOUISE'S place, between the FORD and CASELLA figures. Assumes the same pose as the CASELLA figure. To the figure.*] This is a surprise. A triumph of science. [*Looks at FORD.*] Who is this Not Ford?

MARTIN. Yes, he is. In the number 604 dinner jacket!

CASELLA. Oh, my! I owe this man a hundred thousand dollars! [*Gets up, lost in thought.*] Such a plain little working-girl! What beautiful plans I had for her! [*Looks at the CASELLA figure. Bends toward it.*] What is this? What's wrong with your vest? What are these holes? And your shirt-front is burnt. Speak.

Why don't you speak? Porter, what is your name?

MARTIN. Martin Acs, begging your pardon.

CASELLA. Martin Acs, what's happened to this vest?

MARTIN. Mr. Misch shot into it.

CASELLA. What? Really?

MISCH [*gets up*]. Really.

CASELLA [*to the CASELLA figure*]. And you still live? How many bullets did you get? [*Looks.*] Three. Four.

MISCH. I shot all six into it.

CASELLA. Then two of them went astray. Too bad. [*To MISCH.*] And tell me, please, what has he done to you?

MISCH. He seduced my mistress.

CASELLA [*to the CASELLA figure*]. You scoundrel . . . you do such things in my absence? [*To MISCH.*] He says that not a word of it is true. You are seeing things.

MISCH. I am not seeing things. I saw with my own eyes how the girl held his hand, loved him, embraced him; you stood for all that, you sat there calmly, as though it were the most natural thing.

CASELLA. But what was I to do, when I was made of wood?

MISCH. Then answer now for what you did before.

CASELLA. But you have already shot me!

MISCH. But you got well and you are here. A nice little murder, if after it the corpse appears in two editions. Only I have luck like this!

CASELLA. If you mix me up any more, I won't know myself which one of the two I am.

MISCH. You are the one with the figure. You are responsible for him. Don't keep on hiding from one to

the other. When you seduce her, you are made of flesh. When I call you to account with a revolver, you are of wood. I am I. But you are not you. You are your money. So isn't it all the same what you are made of?

CASELLA. Now I hardly know, either.

MISCH. I was overcome with bitterness. And when my mistress wanted to sit in your lap, I shot you. That's what happened.

CASELLA [*to FORD*]. Please, tell me, Ford. You just looked on, while they shot a man here who owes you a hundred thousand dollars? What sort of a business man are you?

MISCH. I am more sober now, but I'll stand for what I did.

CASELLA. In any case, you are more sober than I am. [*Studies him.*] You are a great big boy.

MISCH. How cruelly you look at me. Now you'd like to shoot me to get even.

CASELLA. No, my boy. [*Points to CASELLA figure.*] Perhaps he. Not I. [*Comes down to him.*] To start shooting, when you are freed and your fancy roves drunken, without fetters, that's *you*. You want to hear my thoughts, altogether freed, unfettered? I'd like to take out my pocketbook.

MISCH. Why?

CASELLA. That you might give me the girl.

MISCH. To buy her from me?

CASELLA. Yes. If you are sober, you will not dare to point the revolver at me. And I do not dare to produce the money. After we are drunk, both of us reach into our pockets. You into your hip-pocket, I

into my coat-pocket. How much does that girl cost?

MISCH. What a filthy question!

CASELLA. Well, do you see now how it hurts when one gets so . . . blasé . . . you selfish child? Are you the only one allowed to hurt to the quick? You shot me. You are a rebel. I am a capitalist. This is the way I fight for the one I like. That is to say, this *would* be the way I'd fight if I were another sort of person, and if you were another sort of person. And if she were another sort of person.

MISCH [*sarcastic*]. You love her? Love?

CASELLA. More. The potent meeting of two forces. In the case of two clouds, they call this lightning. In the case of two human beings, it has no name as yet. But it is just as clear and just as inevitable as lightning. You also realized this, otherwise you would not have murdered me.

MISCH. And you recognized my rights, otherwise you would not have offered me money.

CASELLA. No one has rights. Only God has rights. There are pains which must be soothed with the aid of drastic medicines.

MISCH. Mine will be soothed without medicine. Simply by my realizing that it is better so for her. Take her away, gratis. Even if I wanted to, I could not sell her. Because she is no longer mine. By the same token, I might sell you the Atlantic Ocean.

CASELLA. I do not buy salt water.

MISCH. Too bad. I could sell you many tears out of my surplus. I have no strength against this world. I stand aside.

CASELLA. You are honest.

MISCH. That's not enough. I want to be more.

CASELLA. More than honest? In our calling, that's called a "sucker."

MISCH. That's what I want to be. I'll tell you something. I'll pay you to take her away.

CASELLA. How much?

MISCH. Not much. As a symbol, one dollar. Let this signify that you did not take her away but that I was freed of her. Only a dollar, because I have no more money.

CASELLA. Hand it over. Business is business. Learn from me how to handle money, Misch! [*Takes the dollar from him.*] I'll immediately apply this to my account. [*Throws it into FORD's lap.*] There remain 99,999!

[*LOUISE enters in her own dress.*]

MISCH. Louise, I gave him money to take you away from me. The peace of my soul was in his hands, and he sold it to me for a dollar. He gave it cheaply. I still bleed, but I am calm. I would have perished of it, were you to stay with me. Go with him.

[*LOUISE keeps on looking from one to the other.*]

CASELLA. This is the sober truth, what he just said. Here two men have talked it out with each other.

LOUISE [*to MISCH*]. I am not going with him. [*Clings to MISCH.*] Is this true? [*There is no answer.*] Don't make a joke of this. I am staying with you. [*To CASELLA.*] Please, all this was foolish. Don't look at me so. I love this poor boy. I am not going. . . .

CASELLA. You repeat it so many times, that I am bound to respect it. The glory was too short. [*To CA-*

SELLA figure.] Well, now speak, you grand lady-killer. Now *you* are in order again, because I am going away. Come to think of it—wait! You'll not do any crazy stunts again in my absence. Porter!

MARTIN. Order?

CASELLA. What is your name?

MARTIN. Martin Acs, begging your pardon.

CASELLA. Martin Acs, I want to take home my head. Screw my head off this ridiculous man and wrap it up in paper.

MARTIN [*handling the head of the CASELLA figure*]. These heads do not come off, kissing your hand.

CASELLA. I'm glad that even in such situations I do not lose my head. Send the whole thing to my home in the morning. [*For a while he looks at LOUISE, who is tightly holding the stubborn, silent MISCH; then he says very softly.*] *Au revoir!*

[*Bows, and goes away. Pause.*]

MISCH. By the way . . . what was this whole thing?

LOUISE [*touches her forehead*]. Foolishness . . . a dream.

MISCH. We were not asleep. We were too much alive. That, too, is a dream.

LOUISE. He has gone.

MISCH. It was terrible, the thing that happened here.

LOUISE. You paid him to take me away.

MISCH. Yes.

LOUISE [*crying*]. But when I love you. . . .

[*Falls on his neck.*]

MISCH. Tell me, my heart . . . am I to escort you to him, or will you go alone?

LOUISE. How can you say that? I want to stay with you.

MISCH. Crying?

LOUISE. Crying!

MISCH. Whom are you crying for? Me or him?

LOUISE. For myself.

MISCH. Whom do you love? Him or me?

LOUISE. Why do you always ask this same question, you stupid men? It is the most stupid question in the world.

[Turns away and wipes her eyes.]

MISCH. Well, go, my dear. I am staying here. I'll have to start work in an hour! The employees are just about coming in. I'll go up on the sixth floor, to the furniture department. I'll choose the most beautiful leather couch there, and I'll lie down on it for an hour. [Turns off the lights over the Riviera.] Good night, Riviera! [To LOUISE, softly.] God be with you!

[Hurries away right.]

LOUISE. God be with you.

[Only after MISCH has gone, does she lift her head slowly, looking after him sadly. ELVIRA enters left.]

ELVIRA [surprised]. Louise!

LOUISE [startled; turns]. Who's that? Is it you? What are you doing here?

ELVIRA. I just came in. They're opening the store already. But what about you? [Looks around.] What went on here? Are you *already* here? Or are you *still* here? Where is Misch?

LOUISE. Elvira. Listen here. Ask nothing. Before going to bed you must put a glass of water by the bed for Misch. Never forget that.

ELVIRA. I don't understand you. Why do you say this?

LOUISE. Do not ask. Listen. [Very much touched, rapidly, softly.] When they bring his shirts home from the wash, always look at the buttons and see that none are missing, because that makes him very nervous.

ELVIRA. Louise!

LOUISE. No Louise about it. On Sundays, let him sleep till ten o'clock. On week-days he gets up at six. He drinks his coffee black without sugar. He does not eat chopped meat. He eats nothing with tomatoes. He likes mayonnaise. The windows should be open, winter as well as summer. If his throat scratches, while swallowing, immediately send for the doctor, as his tonsils are sensitive. Buy him only glycerine soap, because his skin is also sensitive. Do not let him live in his present room, because it has no air. Go higher, rather, but into a sunny room.

[Cries.]

ELVIRA. Louise!

LOUISE [crying]. This is the saddest day of my life!

ELVIRA. How I envy you!

LOUISE [sobbing]. What do you think of my luck! [They embrace each other, giving little cries. ELVIRA weeps, LOUISE laughs, then ELVIRA laughs and LOUISE weeps. In a voice full of tears.] Take care of him, please. Oh, yes. He drinks tea for breakfast—and let him sleep till ten o'clock on Sunday. And when those terrible days come, try to cheer him.

ELVIRA. What days?

LOUISE. When we are going to promote him. He'll be broken up with sorrow. Be next to him in those trying hours. Convince him that it is not I he has to thank. Now . . . go to him and stay with him.

[*Takes her hat and coat.*]

ELVIRA. Where is he?

LOUISE. He went up to the furniture department on the sixth floor, poor thing. But if he is lying down, do not wake him until you have to. Go. . . . [*She is already by the elevator, left.*] God be with you, Elvira!

ELVIRA [*at the elevator, right*].
God be with you, Louise.

[*They enter the elevators at the same time, LOUISE steps into the elevator, left, and ELVIRA into the one, right. The two elevators start simultaneously, LOUISE's down, ELVIRA's up.*]

CURTAIN

S T I L L L I F E

Translated by

SANFORD J. GREENBURGER

Not yet produced in America

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
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CHARACTERS

THE ACTOR

THE ACTRESS

LIZZIE, *her maid-of-all-work*

[SCENE: *The Actress' apartment.*]

ACTOR [*entering*]. Good evening!

LIZZIE [*sorting some clean linen*].
Good evening!

ACTOR. Isn't your mistress at home?

LIZZIE [*almost gruffly*]. No!

ACTOR. When do you expect her?

LIZZIE. I don't know.

ACTOR. When did she leave?

LIZZIE. I don't know.

[*Pause.*]

ACTOR. Do you think I ought to wait for her?

LIZZIE. I don't know.

ACTOR. How is it possible that she is not at home yet? She is not playing to-night, and on such days she usually dines at eight o'clock. Now it is already quarter past nine! Didn't she say when she would be home?

LIZZIE. No.

ACTOR. Isn't she going to eat at home?

LIZZIE. I do not know.

ACTOR. You don't know? What do you mean, you don't know? Have

you prepared dinner or haven't you? You ought to know that.

LIZZIE [*almost gruffly*]. Leave me alone.

[*Starts to leave the room.*]

ACTOR. You vile creature, I'll murder you. I'll murder you yet! You'll shorten my life! You'll send me to the penitentiary yet—for I will murder you. Stay here.

LIZZIE. Let me go out.

ACTOR [*grabs her arm*]. You'll stay here and confess.

LIZZIE. Since when have we been pals? Don't talk to me that way. Let me go.

ACTOR. You dare talk this way to Sovari? The famous Sovari? Is this the way to talk to me? To me, at whose sight managers tremble?

LIZZIE. Let me go.

ACTOR. No, you will confess. I don't care if you are uncouth. I know that you are, anyway. As a matter of fact I am glad you are nasty because I know that when your mistress comes home, she'll be nasty, too. Nevertheless, I will murder you if

you lie and are silent and keep secrets and conspire and are false and help her to deceive me. You are to die, Lizzie. You won't even be conscious of it, and all of a sudden I will come in and you will be dead.

LIZZIE. Let me alone. What do you want of me?

ACTOR. Who was here this afternoon?

LIZZIE. I do not know. This afternoon? I was out to get some yeast.

ACTOR. You do not know? This afternoon you were out to fetch yeast? Very well. When did she leave the house?

LIZZIE. When I got back, she was gone.

ACTOR. When you got back she was gone. Very well. Whose cigar butt is this in the ash tray?

LIZZIE. You left that here yesterday.

ACTOR [*pointing to an ash tray*]. And you have not emptied that ash tray since?

LIZZIE. No, neither will I empty it to-morrow.

ACTOR. Do you accept money?

LIZZIE. Oh, yes.

ACTOR [*takes some money out of his pocket*]. How much do you want? What's the price of your confession?

LIZZIE. Put it back! I'll take no money from you.

ACTOR. Whom do you take money from?

LIZZIE. From my mistress.

ACTOR. And from Count Tibor, with whom you are in league, from whom you accept money, whom you aid against me, you villain, against me! I foresee that in the end I will go to jail on account of you. What's

that perfume I smell in the linen? Where did you buy the new perfume? Don't bother to answer. You don't know. Very well, my child, very well. How it all will end I have already told you. What's this new perfume? Who bought it for her?

[*Doorbell rings.*]

LIZZIE. My mistress is coming! Don't worry, I'll tell her all about you. In just another minute you'll hold your peace.

ACTRESS [*enters with Lizzie. Looks through the ACTOR as if he were not there at all*]. How long has he been here?

LIZZIE. Not very long. Only about ten minutes.

ACTRESS [*very loud*]. Did you tell him to wait for me?

LIZZIE. No.

ACTRESS. Then why is he waiting?

LIZZIE. I don't know.

ACTRESS. Did you tell him that I would not be home for dinner?

LIZZIE. No.

ACTRESS. Why didn't you tell him that I didn't say when I would be home? It is an accident that I am back so early. I have told you hundreds of times not to let anybody come into the house while I am out.

LIZZIE. What can I do against brute force?

ACTRESS. Very simple. Call a policeman! Understand?

LIZZIE. I understand, kiss your hand. Next time I will do that.

ACTOR [*after a pause*]. Half past nine. Half past nine.

ACTRESS. Quarter past.

ACTOR. Half past.

ACTRESS [*nervous*]. And if it is half past? And if it's quarter to ten? Or half past twenty-nine? What busi-

ness of yours is it? Who are you? Are you my husband?

ACTOR. Where were you until half past nine in the night?

ACTRESS. Nowhere.

ACTOR. Bum! Bum! Where were you from two in the afternoon till half past nine? I'll murder you.

[*Picks up a chair.*]

ACTRESS. Now, now, now—no theatricals. Out, out!

ACTOR [*puts the chair down*]. Where were you until half past nine? We shall die together, for it cannot go on like this any longer. We'll die in the Turkish bath. First I'll shoot you, then myself. My nerves can't stand this any longer, you faithless one, you deceiver, you good-for-nothing, you bum.

ACTRESS. Monkey. Give me a kiss.

[*Reads the paper.*]

ACTOR [*sighing*]. Shocking!

ACTRESS [*reading the paper*]. Sit by me, you monkey, and kiss me here.

[*Points to a spot on her neck.*]

ACTOR. Don't read the paper now.

[*He sobs.*]

ACTRESS. Now, now, now. There's no reason for you to start crying right away. Aren't you ashamed of yourself? The famous, the great, the *Sovari* cries like a baby.

ACTOR [*stifling his sobs*]. God, how unhappy I am!

ACTRESS. That's enough. Quite enough. Behave. Will you do it again?

[*They kiss.*]

ACTOR. Where were you from two until half past nine?

ACTRESS. I did not leave the house until four.

ACTOR. That's not so, because I was here at half past two and you were no longer at home. Something is happening to you, Sciarelli.

Something's stirring inside of you again—I feel it. For a while you behave, but now you are starting all over again. What is the matter with you? What do you want of me? Why do you torture me? Do you love another? What is the matter with you? Do you want to kill me? To ruin me? On days when you torture me like this, at night I play like a ham. You are ruining my talent. You are robbing me of my bread. What do you want? Where were you this afternoon? Answer me, otherwise I don't know what I'll do.

ACTRESS. I was at home. I just went over to the neighbors, to the Reiners'.

ACTOR. The Reiners' weren't at home all day.

ACTRESS. That's why I came right back.

ACTOR. I sat here from half past two until half past three and you didn't come. Did it take you an hour to come back here from the neighboring house?

ACTRESS. I came back immediately. On the stairs I met the janitor who told me that his wife had just had a new baby boy. So I went right down with him and looked at the little boy. He was born early to-day.

ACTOR. Sciarelli, that is not true. The janitor's wife had a boy three months ago. I know because I gave her money then. If this is the same child, you are a liar, but if it is a new one and only three months after, it is a miracle.

ACTRESS. I saw immediately that it was an older child. They fooled me. They always think up things to make me give them tips.

ACTOR. And then? Where did you go after that?

ACTRESS. I stayed at home until seven.

ACTOR. That is not so.

ACTRESS. Oh, yes, it is so.

ACTOR. It is not so because at half past six I was here again and you were not at home. Besides, the match that I put into the keyhole was still untouched, so you were not home at all after I left here at half past three. You have lied again. You are over-run with lies.

ACTRESS. And if I did lie? What are you? Who are you? Are you my husband?

ACTOR. Starting again. Starting all over again.

ACTRESS. Yes, it is starting. But if you wish, it will stop. Everything will stop. I have had enough of this. Everybody is amazed that I still talk to you.

ACTOR. Who is amazed? Mrs. Froschel is amazed. Pia Putzi is amazed. And you give a darn about them? They are the ones who set the standard for you? Do you know what I'll do to them? Don't get me excited or I'll tell you what I'll do. And the manager's wife is amazed too, eh? The manager's wife who cannot count even on her hair the number of lovers she has had, because her hair falls out quicker than the number of her lovers increase.

ACTRESS. Yes, every one thinks it is ignoble of you not to want to marry me. If you do not respect me then do not come here, and if you do come here, make no scenes, because you have no right to. Why do you come here? I know—that's all you want me for.

ACTOR. For what?

ACTRESS. For *that*. That's what everybody says.

ACTOR. You are starting again.

ACTRESS. Yes, I am starting in again. Every day I am humiliated in some way. Up to now society did not know just where to place me, but here I have my exact position: in this lousy theatre I am just the least person, because not even Sovari wants to marry me.

ACTOR. "Not even Sovari." What kind of talk is that? Who is Sovari that they dare to speak of him in such manner? Who said that?

ACTRESS. I did.

ACTOR. And I repeat what I have already said a hundred times. Sovari is a respectable man who cannot swallow your past in one gulp.

ACTRESS. My past? How ungentlemanly! Even to say such a thing!

ACTOR. You force me to. "Not even Sovari!" Am I so unimportant that I must marry anybody at all in a hurry? May I not doubt, consider, hesitate? Have I no honor? I have a respectable, poor family; a poor but proud mother and a poor, respectable sister who is in despair because I and you—I and you . . . I . . . and with you . . .

ACTRESS. Out! Out!

ACTOR. No wonder I lose my tact when you get me excited.

ACTRESS. My past. What do you know of my past?

ACTOR. Lieutenant Sterzhofer in Graz.

ACTRESS. I took French lessons from him, and I am grateful to him for them. Every day he gave me a lesson. He labored over me. Quite unselfishly!

ACTOR. Judge Pauli. What kind of lessons did he give you? For when the lieutenant was gone, he be-

came the daily caller. You even went to Vienna with him!

ACTRESS. What should I have done? He happened to be going there at the same time.

ACTOR. Pharmacist Zeislhuber.

ACTRESS. In the first place he isn't a pharmacist. He owns a drug store. You are crazy.

ACTOR. Robert Stein.

ACTRESS. You are not normal.

ACTOR. Hugo Kaudersch.

ACTRESS. Kaudersch!!

ACTOR. Ahlfelder.

ACTRESS. Ahlfelder!!!

ACTOR. Lieutenant Sauerwein.

ACTRESS. Good God!

ACTOR. Dr. Stickerz.

ACTRESS! You're a pig!

ACTOR. Bela Kern.

ACTRESS. Idiot!

ACTOR. Wollmann, Pumpke, Rudolfi, Grassel, Stern.

ACTRESS. Stern!!!

ACTOR. Jodlebauer!

ACTRESS. Stern!!!!

ACTOR. Hambacher, Keller, Worzel.

ACTRESS. Stern!!!!!!

ACTOR. That's interesting. Only Stern bothers her.

ACTRESS [*pointing to the door*]. Out with you!

ACTOR. I forgave all, all of this, because I am mad; you are right in one thing—I love you like a madman.

ACTRESS. Get out of here!

ACTOR. I wouldn't say a word if you behaved decently now. But you are starting all over again. Now I feel, I know that you want to deceive me, that you are deceiving me.

ACTRESS [*goes to the door and shouts*]. Lizzie! Call a policeman.

LIZZIE [*voice*]. Yes, madame.

ACTOR. It is enough to drive one to

despair, how a woman can drive one out of one's mind.

ACTRESS. Please do not exert yourself. A policeman will be here presently. The authorities will attend to the rest.

ACTOR. But it is revolting—all the things that I have said. I cannot even recognize myself any more. You can see even from how confused I am that I become quite mad when you torture me. It is clear . . . how much I love you.

ACTRESS. You can tell it to the authorities later. You wanted to murder me. That is a criminal offense.

ACTOR. Is that so? Now, if I had broken a plate, that would have been something. But things that one only says?

ACTRESS. You monkey. How can you be so nervous?

ACTOR. You deceived me. Do you love me? Say that you love me.

ACTRESS. As soon as you recover your sanity.

ACTOR. It's coming back now. Just one more thing, my dear. Permit me only this one single question, and after that it will be all over. It will be as beautiful as it is becoming to two artists, gentle and kind.

ACTRESS. What is it?

ACTOR. When you came home just now, you rang the bell.

ACTRESS. Yes. Well?

ACTOR. Why did you ring?

ACTRESS. I can't—I don't understand you.

ACTOR. You do not? My child, just think. Please don't misunderstand, but I know that usually you do not ring because you have a key. Lizzie has a key, too. Perhaps I am not indiscreet when I admit that even I have a key. Why did you have to

ring? What did you do with your key?

ACTRESS. You want to ask to whom I gave my key.

ACTOR. I do not express myself so rudely.

ACTRESS. You are so funny . . . because Lizzie's key was in the lock from the inside.

ACTOR. That is not true, because ten minutes before you came I opened the door with my own key. The lock was empty and Lizzie has not moved out of this room since. Where is your key? Do not bring Lizzie's key here, for then she will have none.

ACTRESS. You see, everything is because of this.

ACTOR. Because of what, and what is?

ACTRESS. Everything is because of this, and this is why everything is. Because of this cross examination, because of this sickness, because of this jealousy. All unhappiness comes from that. That's why I dare not move, I dare not say anything, because to you everything is a lie and an excuse. One of the keys has been lost. Lizzie lost her key.

ACTOR. Why did you say then that it was in the lock from the inside?

ACTRESS. Because I do not dare to say anything any more. You are like a madman. You force me to lie even though you know there is nothing I hate so much as lies.

[*She weeps.*]

ACTOR. If you didn't cry now, then everything would be all right. But since you are shedding tears there must be something wrong about this key.

ACTRESS. How can you say such a thing?

ACTOR. Because you tell all sorts of

lies. Because nothing is true. Neither the superintendent, nor the Reiners, nor going away, nor coming home, nor the losing of the key. Nothing is true. You were seen beyond the railroad with Count Tibor and the Count kissed your neck several times and finally put you into a cab and you drove away from there. You stopped in front of Tibor's mansion and you went inside with that man. Do not tell me that you went in for a minute only because you went in at three o'clock in the afternoon. Don't say that you came right out because you came away from him exactly at nine o'clock. I'll murder you, you . . . you! One more move and you will be on your knees in front of me.

[*Clutches her arm.*]

ACTRESS. Let go of my arm.

ACTOR. Never.

ACTRESS. I'll bite your hand.

ACTOR. I'd like to see you do that. [*She bites his hand.*] Very well, I'll let you go. Had you not bit me now you would have died. The beast protects herself cleverly. You will never see me again. Adieu.

ACTRESS [*rings the bell. To LIZZIE as she enters*]. Lizzie, didn't I tell you to call a policeman? Why didn't you do as I told you?

LIZZIE. I thought you were just saying that.

ACTRESS. Run right out and get a policeman. One cannot even be sure of one's life.

[*LIZZIE exits.*]

ACTOR. You will die. I have been told about everything.

ACTRESS. So you work with spies?

ACTOR. I saw you, too. You are a revolting woman. One more word out of you and I'll tell you what you are.

ACTRESS. No, no, I could not survive that.

ACTOR. And yet . . . ah, there is still a spark of decency left in you. Don't cry.

ACTRESS [*sobs*]. If you say that, I cannot survive.

ACTOR. Your poor mother out in the country in her little room . . . if she had seen. If she only knew what you have become.

ACTRESS. Leave my mother alone.

ACTOR. That good, fine, clean old woman. That saint, that martyr.

ACTRESS. Don't mix my mother up with it. Don't insult my mother.

ACTOR. I? Insult her? I am sorry for the poor woman. If she only knew what has become of her child.

ACTRESS. What do you want of me? Why do you embitter me? Why do you tear my heart out? You use my mother to stop me from deceiving you. Very well, you shall know—know what you do not know. Yes . . .

ACTOR. Well? What?

[*Pulls a revolver out of his pocket.*]

ACTRESS. You shall know it! Put that knife away.

ACTOR. It isn't a knife, it's a revolver.

ACTRESS. Well, then, put it away.

ACTOR. You will die.

ACTRESS. I could not survive it.

ACTOR. So you admit it. Briefly, you admit it. Say it, my child. Don't be afraid. You need not be sad over my broken heart. Say that you admit it.

ACTRESS. In the first place, this is my apartment. And in the second place, it is already half past ten.

ACTOR. Only quarter past.

ACTRESS. Half past. But it is all the same. A stranger has no right to create a disturbance at night. Go

home. I never want to see you again. You have no right here.

ACTOR. I have no right. But Count Tibor has rights.

ACTRESS. He has just as much right as you have.

[*She rings for the maid.*]

ACTOR. That's fine. Thank you. Do you know what you are? I'll tell you what you are, you . . .

ACTRESS. What do I care? Say it. This isn't the first time you will have said it. [*To LIZZIE as she enters.*] Lizzie, have you prepared supper?

LIZZIE [*giving her a piece of bread and butter*]. I did not know that you would be home.

ACTOR [*sitting sideways, to himself*]. A man who sacrificed his name, his career, his everything for a woman . . .

ACTRESS [*to LIZZIE*]. If there were only some cold cuts here at least. Is there none of the ham left?

ACTOR [*still talking to himself*]. Aha, aha. And what for? Just to have his most beautiful and truest feeling insulted.

LIZZIE. You ate the last of the ham bone yesterday.

ACTRESS. That's right, I ate from the ham bone yesterday.

ACTOR [*still to himself*]. A man who has only one single fault . . . the woman he loves . . .

ACTRESS. Is Blau's delicatessen closed?

LIZZIE. Oh, yes, at this time of the night.

ACTOR [*to himself*]. Artists' fate! Ha, ha! Artists' fate!

LIZZIE. But I can get something cold from the saloon.

ACTOR [*to himself*]. The fate of gullible man.

ACTRESS [*to LIZZIE*]. That will be the best.

ACTOR [*to himself*]. Faith, honor, reverence, a true and manly virile love—does that mean nothing to you? Answer, Sciarelli.

ACTRESS [*to LIZZIE*]. What shall I eat? We had herring yesterday. Let it be . . . let it be . . .

ACTOR [*to her*]. All of the values of the soul and of the body are accepted as gifts! The most important—the soul!

ACTRESS [*to LIZZIE*]. A few slices of salami, some tongue, and some liverwurst.

ACTOR [*to her*]. . . . with which one then becomes bored; for you are tired of my soul, are you not?

ACTRESS [*to LIZZIE*]. And a dill pickle.

ACTOR [*to her*]. And then I'm dragged in the mud! In the mud!

LIZZIE. Beer, too?

ACTRESS. Dark.

LIZZIE. We have apples here.

ACTOR [*to her*]. And the demand that we forge an eternal bond! Do you think that is right?

ACTRESS [*to LIZZIE*]. Have you money?

LIZZIE. Yes. But, madame, if you please, the dark beer . . .

ACTOR [*to her*]. How do you reconcile that with the demand that I lead you to the altar?

LIZZIE. His dark beer is no good. I'd rather bring light beer.

ACTRESS. Very well. And if he has no salami, then bring some ham.

LIZZIE. I'll bring whatever is fresh.

ACTOR [*laughing bitterly*]. Lizzie, you are well trained. When I have a lot of money I'm going to buy you.

LIZZIE [*to ACTRESS*]. Please don't be angry with me for not preparing

supper, but you said that you would not be home this evening.

ACTOR. Briefly, you had planned to dine *à separée*.

ACTRESS [*to him*]. Yes, *à separée* . . .

[*She eats the bread and butter.*]

ACTOR. She eats serenely as a child—an innocent, hungry little girl. Briefly, a *separée* was planned.

ACTRESS. Yes, *separée*.

ACTOR. Then why are you still sitting here? Why are you eating here? A poor, cold actor's supper in this exquisite atmosphere?

ACTRESS. The *separée* was planned. Let's not forget that. I am a *separée* lady. Get out! I never want to see you any more.

ACTOR. I know, I know. I have known for the last half hour that you want to go away from home. Now you want to go away in the night. You are dressed.

ACTRESS. Why are you wearing full dress?

ACTOR. Because none of my other suits are any good.

ACTRESS. In a *separée*.

ACTOR. Something like that.

ACTRESS. Well then, my dear, go. But go now—really, quietly, and forever.

ACTOR. Very well. Very well, you'll see. Very well, my precious.

[*He goes out. LIZZIE enters with a tray on which is the supper.*]

ACTRESS. Is he gone?

LIZZIE. Yes.

ACTRESS. Did he say anything to you?

LIZZIE. He said that I would see, too.

ACTRESS. What did you answer?

LIZZIE. I? Nothing. I closed the door behind him.

ACTRESS [*looking at the food*]. What did you bring?

LIZZIE. A nice ham bone and a bit of red wine.

[*There is a noise outside.*]

ACTRESS. Did you hear that?

LIZZIE. Did you hear that? He is gone, now.

ACTRESS. Look out the window.

LIZZIE [*looks out the window*]. He is going away.

ACTRESS. In which direction?

LIZZIE. Toward Church Square. Now he has stopped. He is coming back.

ACTRESS [*sighing*]. If only some day it would get to the point where he wouldn't come right back when he goes away forever.

LIZZIE. He didn't come in. He has passed the house door.

ACTRESS. I see him better from here than you can, looking at him. He is brandishing his cane in the air.

LIZZIE. Yes, ma'am.

ACTRESS. That is for Count Tibor.

LIZZIE. He is kicking the air with one foot.

ACTRESS. That's for you. Let him be, and come here.

LIZZIE [*comes to her*]. He is a good man. He is like butter, like oleomargarine. He does whatever you want him to do.

ACTRESS. How do you know what I want? That is what you believe. I will be his wife as soon as I want to. Now the question is something else.

LIZZIE [*at the window*]. He is coming, he is coming! He just rang the house door-bell.

ACTRESS. Lizzie!

LIZZIE. Yes, madame?

ACTRESS. Salt, pepper.

LIZZIE. My God, forgive me!

ACTRESS. This is your fourth year with me but never has it happened that nothing was missing.

[*The ACTOR enters. Silently paces the floor.*]

LIZZIE. Wouldn't you like to eat something?

ACTOR. Aha, you want to poison me!

LIZZIE. How well you guessed it.

[*She hurries out.*]

ACTOR. What's this? Lizzie is nice to me? It seems that you have forgiven me while I was not here.

ACTRESS. You were not here? I thought you were here.

ACTOR. I had gone.

ACTRESS. So? I didn't even notice. When you go away it is as when other people come in.

ACTOR. I went away and came back.

ACTRESS. Naturally. And I was so happy at last to be able to eat in peace.

ACTOR. But you haven't eaten a single bite since I left.

ACTRESS. Oh, yes I did.

ACTOR. You are just beginning to eat your dinner and the bread and butter . . . there were exactly three bites in it. Here they are: one, two, three, and you just bit for the fourth time. I observed that carefully.

ACTRESS. What do you want to prove by that?

ACTOR. That you stopped eating when I left. Don't make yourself worse than you are, you precious, you sweet. Now that I am watching you eat, I could cry again . . .

ACTRESS. Do I eat so beautifully?

ACTOR. No, when you eat, it touches me because you don't do that on the stage. Your eating is still mine, it is real, it is personal, it is you. Eat, sweetheart, eat . . . with this bread and butter in your hand all is right, is personal, personal, personal.

ACTRESS [*puts the bread and butter aside*]. Wait a minute. I must put

my bread and butter away, to embrace you. Do you love me?

ACTOR. I adore you.

ACTRESS. Much?

ACTOR. Madly. [*He kisses her.*] Personal; that, too, was personal!

[*LIZZIE enters bringing a pail with a bottle of champagne in it.*]

LIZZIE. Take care, please, the champagne is in it!

ACTOR. What did Lizzie say?

ACTRESS. Something about champagne. We should be careful.

ACTOR. Now sit down there, my sweet little kittykins, and eat, my precious. I will serve you. [*Looking at the champagne.*] Oh! It's French! Mumm's! Where did you get this Mumm's?

[*Pours some into a glass.*]

ACTRESS. I'll tell you, but don't get excited. Count Tibor sent me two bottles of it. [*The ACTOR pours the champagne back into the bottle.*] What are you doing?

ACTOR. I refuse to drink any of it.

ACTRESS. Don't start again. When we get married everything will be mutual anyway. . . . We'll put our salaries together, and even the gifts will belong to both of us . . . If you get anything from the public you will give me half, will you not?

ACTOR. All of it, precious.

ACTRESS. Then why don't you drink some of this?

ACTOR. Why did the Count send it?

ACTRESS. For me to drink it.

ACTOR. But how? What was the reason? He wanted to come here at night and drink champagne.

ACTRESS. But, please . . .

ACTOR. How did he suddenly get the idea of sending two bottles of champagne?

[*Again fills the glasses.*]

ACTRESS. They played some sort of an amateur performance and this Count Tibor played a Jew . . .

ACTOR. A Jew!

ACTRESS. He needed a big, black beard and came to me. I told Hanzs Scheller and he went and made up the Count Tibor as a Jew. He got ten marks for it, which were very welcome because the poor fellow has five children and the sixth one is on the way. There you are.

ACTOR. Six children? That's right. But what has that to do with the champagne?

[*He drinks.*]

ACTRESS. Oh, didn't I tell you about that? He sent these two bottles of champagne by Scheller because I recommended Scheller to him. Count Tibor scored a huge success in the piece. That's simple enough.

ACTOR. Because you told this story so quickly, it is far from being true. But now it doesn't make any difference. I have a principle: I do not drink of free champagne which desiring counts send my wife.

ACTRESS. And the gold cigarette case that was given you by the red-headed Mrs. Rado? Did you hesitate to give that to me? Did I ask you what you got that for?

ACTOR. But permit me, I gave her lessons!

[*He drinks.*]

ACTRESS. You gave her lessons!

ACTOR. I coached her movements for an amateur performance.

ACTRESS. Movements! See? That is the same.

ACTOR. Well, then, if it is the same! [*He drinks.*] Phoeey! I am a good-for-nothing because I drink this champagne! Phoeey!

[*He drinks.*]

ACTRESS. Yes, now you are disgraced. You pighead, you genius, you ox!

ACTOR [*embracing her*]. Can't we always talk to each other so nicely and pleasantly?

ACTRESS. You . . . you wonderful one! My God! Why am I not as talented as you are?

ACTOR. Well, you mustn't demand too much.

ACTRESS. All this aggravation is because I am not worthy of you. A second soubrette with a small voice . . . and the very best comic *bon vivant*, the very, very best . . . and what will you be when you have developed fully!

ACTOR. If I could live in quiet peace . . . if you didn't torture me, I could develop.

ACTRESS. You will develop, my sweet, you will develop.

ACTOR. And will you be true to me?

ACTRESS. I am true, you ninny, only I do not show it!

ACTOR. My angel, if only I knew what it is you want of me. Because you want something, I am certain. I hereby kiss away your tears and you will tell me what you want.

ACTRESS. Call me Emma.

ACTOR. Sciarelli, I am already used to this, your glorious name.

[*He drinks.*]

ACTRESS. Glorious! At other times you do not of me speak like this. At other times you look down on me. You do not consider me talented.

ACTOR. I? You? Chancellor, have you any other wish?

ACTRESS. Only one . . . just a single one . . .

ACTOR. Well?

ACTRESS. And that is the most important one. Seriously.

ACTOR. Aha, ha, ha!

ACTRESS. What do you mean?

ACTOR. Now I'll find out why I suffered so much this evening.

ACTRESS. Why do you stand directly in front of me at the end of the second finale in this new operetta?

ACTOR. I stand directly in front of you?

ACTRESS. Yes, you cover me. You hide me from the audience.

ACTOR. In the second finale?

ACTRESS. Yes. Once in a hundred years I have a small rôle in which I could stand out and even now you stand in front of me.

"Oh, you little, droll king's son,
Oh, you little, droll king's son,
You king's son, king's son, king's
son,"

Then I, who play the Princess, lean over toward the table on the right and collapse on it because the king's son leaves me. And you come as the Premier and sing:

"That our hope, our salvation
Shall not desert us, desert us,"

And we sing:

"Desert us, desert us, desert us,
desert us, desert us,"

Isn't it so?

ACTOR. Yes, desert us, desert us, desert us. Well, and—

ACTRESS. So then. Now I have the opportunity to do a nice bit: I sob, wring my hands, look up to heaven, faint—all beautiful things, all effective—and what happens? You stand right in front of me.

ACTOR. Sciarelli? I stand in front of you?

ACTRESS. Yes. You see? You don't even notice it. In the beginning I didn't say a thing, because I tried to sob behind your back. I stuck my head out, but all in vain, because you jump around. When I stuck my head toward the right, you jumped toward the right. When I stuck it toward the left, you jumped toward the left, so the audience does not see me and my entire rôle is spoiled.

ACTOR. So that is why you tortured me so here all evening?

ACTRESS. What can I do so long as I have no other weapon?

ACTOR. So that is why I should marry you? That is why my sister should jump out of a fourth story window?

ACTRESS. This is the first time I hear about that. Very nice. You kept quiet about that until now.

ACTOR. I am not accustomed to threatening with the suicide of others.

ACTRESS. I am so unhappy, Sovari, I am so unhappy.

[*She sinks on the table.*]

ACTOR. Sciarelli, this is no time for jokes. One question. Pardon, but just a single question. What am I in that piece?

ACTRESS. You are the Premier.

ACTOR. Well, what do you think? That there is no acting to that part? The Premier simply sings that he is overthrown, that his career is done for? Do you know what kind of pain that is? It is one of the greatest blows in life and it is the duty of the actor to express that, to reproduce it. So when I say: "done for," I jump to the right and hold my head, and when I say "done for" again, I hold my head again and jump hither and thither with a bitter face, like every

overthrown premier. Such a thing must be acted out. Right . . . left . . . done for . . . done for. . .

ACTRESS. You see? You see? You see? This is how you cover me . . . this is exactly how you cover me. . .

ACTOR. But if there is no room elsewhere! At the left—here, there—stand the pages and the peasants in yellow. In the middle, sits the old King. Here—there—stand the Royal Guards and the opposition peasants in green. Where, then, can I jump around?

ACTRESS [*weeping*]. Anywhere except in front of me. And still you dare to say that you love me?

ACTOR. Like the moon—the stars. Like the boatman of the sea, the rising sun on the shores of the Pamphiles.

ACTRESS. Then why do you suppress me?

ACTOR. Sciarelli! I? Suppress you?

ACTRESS. You yourself admit that you cover me. I covered Benutzky for two months in Linz, because she paddled my fiancé.

ACTOR. Why?

ACTRESS. Because her husband was my fiancé. Helping to play, that is love. Not to marry one and to die for one. That is for the civilians. In the third act I would have the right to stand in front of you because by that time you are already an overthrown Premier, and I recover my rank as Princess. See! Yet I do not do it. That is love.

ACTOR. It is all the same. You may take my life, but I will not permit you to interfere with my art. If you don't like it, see the manager.

ACTRESS. Very well. If I do go to see him, I will go as an artist and not as a woman.

ACTOR. We know that. You go into

his office as an artist and come out as a woman. Go. See the manager.

ACTRESS. I am going.

ACTOR. Threaten me.

ACTRESS. Will you step aside in the finale?

ACTOR. No, I would rather marry you.

ACTRESS. Will you not step aside for me?

ACTOR. No.

ACTRESS. Then I will stand in front of you in the third act, when the King dismisses you.

ACTOR. I'd like to see you do that.

ACTRESS. Very well, you'll see me do it.

ACTOR. Very well, I would like to see it— And this woman dares to say that she loves me!

ACTRESS. See, you take it that way, too.

[*She weeps.*]

ACTOR. If the public only saw Sciarelli crying at home!

ACTRESS. It is terrible how I suffer. Give me a swallow of champagne.

ACTOR. There is none left. The bottle is empty.

ACTRESS. But my full glass was around here somewhere.

ACTOR. That's empty, too. Phew, this champagne!

ACTRESS. What have you got against this champagne?

ACTOR. Don't be afraid, I'll pay for it. I'll pay for it on the first.

ACTRESS. Why are you so cruel to me? You are killing me.

ACTOR. Or you, me.

ACTRESS. Love me, Sovari . . . I will excuse you from marriage, I will excuse you from suicide. Don't forsake me in my career. Worship me

just a little bit more. . . . You see how weak I am, compared to you. . . . I am nothing and you are the great, the powerful, the strong, the genius, the lion!

ACTOR. Will you ever interfere in my art again?

ACTRESS. No.

ACTOR. Never?

ACTRESS. Never again.

ACTOR. Well, then . . . I will never again stand in front of you in the finale. That's all right, that's all right. I am doing it of my own free will, however. It is my whim as a gentleman and I am not forced to it. You must solemnly acknowledge that.

ACTRESS. I acknowledge it. You. . . . You . . . my lord . . . my master.

ACTOR. Say: My Lion. I like that.

ACTRESS. My lion, my dessert! You . . . You, My Sunday! You . . . my King, you . . . my President!

ACTOR. President! That, perhaps, is still nicer than lion.

ACTRESS. I adore you! If I weren't ashamed. . . .

ACTOR. What then?

ACTRESS. No, no, I am embarrassed.

ACTOR. Tell me, my sweet. Say it, say what you have on your heart.

ACTRESS. If I weren't ashamed . . . I would ask you for an autograph.

ACTOR. You precious. [*LIZZIE fetches the other bottle of champagne.*] What is this?

ACTRESS. It is the other bottle of champagne.

ACTOR. So you may see what kind of a gentleman you are dealing with, you will get some of this bottle, too!

[*Takes the bottle to open it.*]

CURTAIN

THE PLAY'S THE THING

Adapted from the Hungarian by

P. G. WODEHOUSE

*First produced in America by
The Charles Frohman Company
November 3, 1926*

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

CHARACTERS

COUNT

SANDOR TURAI, *a famous dramatist*

MANSKY, *his collaborator*

ALBERT ADAM, *a young composer*

ILONA SZABO, *a prima donna*

ALMADY, *a leading actor*

JOHANN DWORNITSCHKEK, *a footman*

MELL, *the Count's secretary*

TWO LACKEYS

The action takes place in a room in a castle on the Italian Riviera, on a Saturday in summer.

ACT I. 2:00 A.M.

ACT II. 6:00 A.M.

ACT III. 7:30 P.M.

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *As the curtain rises a distant orchestra is heard playing Leoncavallo's "Mattinata." The stage is almost dark. The only light comes through two large French windows at the back. Through them we see the moonlit Mediterranean far below, the vague outlines of the precipitous coast, twinkling lights along quays and esplanades, and here and there the faint glow from some lighted window. A lighthouse blinks inter-*

mittently in the far distance. Within the dark room three darker shadows loom against the moonlit windows; the lighted ends of three cigarettes prick the blackness. There is a long pause. It is almost embarrassingly long. Just before one wonders if anything is ever going to happen a man's voice breaks the silence.]

THE MAN'S VOICE. When you stop talking, Sandor, for sixty con-

secutive seconds, there's something wrong. [*One of the shadowy forms is seen to rise and cross to the right wall. We hear the click of an electric switch and instantly the stage is flooded with the warm glow of several electric sconces and candelabra lamps. The light reveals a room beautifully furnished in Italian Renaissance. At the back one shallow step leads up to a raised portion which runs the whole width of the room. Behind it are the French windows, now closed, with a balcony beyond them. To the right a short flight of steps leads to a landing and a door to a bedroom suite. To the left one step leads up to a door to the hall and the remainder of the castle. Occupying the right wall of the lower portion of the room is a great fireplace with a corbelled chimney. A long table stands near it. At the left is a grand piano. Below the piano in the left wall is a door to another bedroom. All these doors are closed. Above the piano toward the center is a small stand with a telephone on it. There are comfortable chairs here and there. The ceiling is beamed and carved. The whole room reflects wealth and beauty. The speaker, who has just lighted the room, is a large and portly man of middle age. His name is MANSKY. He is in a dinner jacket, as are his two companions, SANDOR TURAI, seated in the center, and ALBERT ADAM, near the piano. TURAI is also middle-aged, but younger looking and less portly than MANSKY. A glance shows him to be a man of consequence and dynamic personality. He is wearing a monocle. ALBERT ADAM is a dreamy, handsome boy just over the threshold of manhood. The dis-*

tant orchestra has stopped playing. MANSKY reseats himself to the right of TURAI, and speaks again.] What's on your mind, Sandor?

TURAI. I was just thinking how extraordinarily difficult it is to begin a play. The eternal problem of how to introduce your principal characters.

ADAM. I suppose it must be hard.

TURAI. It is—devilish hard. Up goes the curtain, there is a hush all over the theatre, people come on the stage. Then what? It's an eternity—sometimes as much as a quarter of an hour before the audience finds out who's who and what they are all up to.

MANSKY. I never saw such a fellow. Can't you forget the theatre for a single minute?

TURAI. No. That's why I'm such a great dramatist.

MANSKY. You can't be happy for half an hour unless you're talking shop. Life isn't all theatre.

TURAI. Yes, it is—if you write plays. You know what Alphonse Daudet says in his "Memoirs"? When he stood by his father's deathbed, all he could think of was what a wonderful scene it would make for the stage.

MANSKY. It's silly to let your job become an obsession.

TURAI. Well, that's the theatre. Either you master it or it masters you. And of all the brain-racking things in the world, beginning a play is the worst. That's where your technique comes in, my boy. Take this scene here, for instance. We three—Curtain goes up on three ordinary men in ordinary dinner jackets. How is anybody to know even that this room we're sitting in is a room in a castle?

And how are they to know who we are? If this were a play we would have to start jabbering about a lot of thoroughly uninteresting things until the audience gradually found out who we were.

MANSKY. Well? Why not?

TURAI. Think how much simpler it would be if we were to cut out all that stuff and just introduce ourselves? [*He rises and addresses the audience.*] Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. We three arrived tonight to spend a couple of weeks at this castle. We've just left the dining room where we did ourselves remarkably well with some excellent champagne. My name is Sandor Turai. I am a playwright. I have been a playwright for thirty years. I make a very good thing of it. I bow and step back leaving the stage to you.

[*TURAI steps back and MANSKY steps forward and addresses the audience.*]

MANSKY. Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Mansky—I, too, am a playwright, and this gentleman's life-long collaborator. We are probably the best known firm in the business.

TURAI. Come to Mansky and Turai for all comedies, farces and operettas. Satisfaction guaranteed.

MANSKY. I, too, make a very good thing out of it.

TURAI. Which brings us—

MANSKY. —to the remaining member of the trio.

[*They indicate ADAM, who rises and addresses the audience in similar fashion but with more diffidence and none of their assurance.*]

ADAM. The last *and* least. I,

ladies and gentlemen, am Albert Adam. I am twenty-five years old and I compose music.

TURAI. Very good music, too.

ADAM. I have done the score for the latest operetta by these two kind gentlemen. My first effort. They discovered me. They got me invited to this castle. Regardless of expense, they bought me a complete wardrobe. Without them I am a complete non-entity. I have no parents, no reputation, and no money.

TURAI. But—you're young.

MANSKY. And gifted.

ADAM. And in love with the prima donna.

TURAI. Don't bother to tell them that. An audience takes it for granted that the young composer is in love with the prima donna. It's tradition.

ADAM. Thank heaven.

TURAI [*again addressing the audience*]. Isn't that the simplest way to begin a play?

MANSKY. Very crude. If that were all there was to it, any fool could write plays.

TURAI. A great many do. But you see how absurdly easy it is—All you have to do is—

MANSKY. All right, all right, all right. For heaven's sake, stop talking shop. I've had enough. Save it for to-morrow.

TURAI. Perhaps you're right. Yes, it's a treat to get a couple of hours off for a change. Wonderful, that trip in the car—Italy! . . . And here we are, free at last from the stuffy world of behind the scenes, out of the reach of thin-skinned actors and thick-skinned managers. All the year I've looked forward to these two weeks. A princely host and

a house full of smart people—just what men like ourselves need to inspire us. And, mark this, my friends, nothing to worry about—for our job is done. [*He goes to the window, opens it, steps on to the balcony and speaks from there.*] The operetta is finished and off our minds. And, moreover, it is summer. The weather is perfect, the night is gorgeous, the sea—is the sea, and the dinner was good. [*He comes back into the room.*] Yes, we must remember it. It's been a great day. August the twentieth.

MANSKY. Friday.

TURAI. What of it?

MANSKY. I wish it wasn't.

TURAI. Don't be such an old woman!

MANSKY. No one ought to arrive anywhere on a Friday.

ADAM. [*dreamily*]. What difference does it make—Friday, Saturday, Sunday—Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter—life's always wonderful.

TURAI [*crosses to ADAM*]. My unlucky day is Tuesday. Among other things—[*To MANSKY.*—you were born on a Tuesday.

MANSKY. Well, look at it for yourself. Here's to-day's little bag of bad luck. San Martino—midday—violent thunderstorm followed by blow-out. Set us back an hour. Fiero—early afternoon—ran over dog, surrounded by angry multitude, had to scatter money to every one in sight to keep from getting mobbed. More delay, and we reach here at ten instead of eight. Friday. And when we arrive, who is out? Our princely host. Who else? Everybody. All gone off on a picnic. Friday. And the beautiful, the one and only, the most vitally important

member of the whole house party—our adorable prima donna—where is she? Also off on a picnic. Is she expected home to-night? No. When is she expected? No one knows. Friday.

TURAI. Oh, she'll be back.

MANSKY. Well, that won't spoil Friday's record, because it's Saturday now.

ADAM. And I've got to wait a whole night before I see her. It's cruel.

MANSKY. Just Friday.

TURAI. Well, now listen to *me*. I'll give you *my* version of the day's proceedings. Friday, San Martino—midday—capital luncheon including some really drinkable coffee. During the meal, a few passing drops of rain. Result: perfect roads—no dust. Fiero—early afternoon—Injured a dog and for a while it looked as though the populace was about to injure *us*. But our Friday good luck held. The dog made a miraculous recovery and when last seen was sitting up and taking nourishment. And a few insignificant coins, judiciously distributed, made the populace our friends for life. To resume. We arrived here some hours late, but—what a bit of luck *that* was. Everybody away, nobody in the house to expect tired men to make conversation. Furthermore we dine on a picturesque terrace of a wonderful old Italian castle and are given as fine a curried chicken as I ever tasted.

MANSKY. I loathe curry.

TURAI. And in conclusion, let me tell you the crowning piece of good fortune of this magical Friday. [*He indicates the door to the bedroom at left.*] The next room to this is Ilona's.

ADAM. What!

TURAI. Yes, through that door is the room of the beautiful, the one and only. And having a pull with the butler, I managed to get this suite for ourselves. There's luck for you.

MANSKY. For him.

TURAI. And for us. We profit indirectly. When a composer is happy he writes song-hits. When a prima donna is happy, she stops singing off the key. And the librettists gather royalties from the resulting triumph.

MANSKY. Sordid brute. You've no poetry in your soul.

TURAI. But I have a balance in my bank—much more satisfactory. As for Ilona being away, that's good luck, too. Think of the pleasant surprise she will get. It is night. The little darling comes home from her picnic. All unsuspecting, she goes to her little room, sinks upon her little bed—

MANSKY. Why on earth must everything always be so little?

TURAI. Why not?

MANSKY. Damned sentimentalism. I know the house well. She has a *huge* room and an *enormous* bed.

TURAI. Immaterial. Quite immaterial. The point is that she comes home, all unsuspecting. She doesn't know we're here. [ADAM, *who has been sitting dreamily at the piano, begins playing softly.*] She doesn't know we've brought the finished operetta with us. She doesn't know I'm going to sing her the waltz song from Act Two—

MANSKY. God help her!

TURAI. . . . the world-famous waltz—[MANSKY *looks at him skeptically.*]—at least, it's not world-

famous yet, but it's bound to become so . . . anyway, the ravishing theme-waltz upon which this infant genius has poured out all the treasure of his love-bewitched soul . . .

[ADAM *stops playing.*]

MANSKY. Be quiet—never praise a composer. It unsettles him. [*Rises. Looks at watch.*] Do you know it's after three—I have been thinking and I've got an idea.

TURAI. Beginner's luck.

MANSKY. Let's go to bed. You can do any singing you want to-morrow. If they're not home yet, it means they're staying out all night. I know the ways of this house. We've been up since five and I'm all in. Three hundred miles are chasing themselves through my head. As for your infant genius with the love-bewitched soul, he's asleep already.

ADAM [*who has been nodding over the piano, awakens with a start*]. I'm not.

TURAI. I've no objection to postponing the surprise-party. Suppose we *wake* her with the waltz.

ADAM. If only she doesn't find out before.

TURAI. That's all right. I particularly told my friend the butler that nobody must know of our arrival till to-morrow morning. The butler is a very important man. He practically runs this house.

ADAM [*rising*]. Then I'm going to take a bath.

TURAI. I don't follow your logic. What has the importance of the butler to do with taking baths?

ADAM. I hate logic.

[*Starts toward the door at right, but stops to gaze out of the window.*]

TURAI. Do you really intend to bathe at this hour?

ADAM. Yes.

TURAI. In the sea?

ADAM [*stands by balcony door*]. No. In the tub. [*The sound of a distant orchestra is heard playing Toselli's "Serenade."*] When you're tired and sleepy and looking forward to something particularly nice, it's wonderful to lie in lukewarm water with your eyes closed.

TURAI. Hear! Hear! [*Sits in large armchair.*] Well— Do as you please, infant. When an artist is working he must pamper himself. [*To MANSKY.*] You have to humor these composers. Did you ever know his grandmother?

MANSKY. I had not that pleasure.

TURAI [*ADAM comes down the steps and sits down again*]. She brought him up when his parents died. She was about *so* high. The littlest old woman I ever saw in my life.

ADAM. Tiny, wasn't she?

TURAI. And the very opposite of this dreamy boy. Always hustling, always on the go. It's her fault that our young friend here has always remained such an unsophisticated babe. She not only mothered him—she smothered him with her love. She was like a little witch in a fairy tale guarding hidden treasure. I'll never forget the day she brought him to me, for the first time.

ADAM. My goodness, I was scared that day.

TURAI. So was I. This little half-portion of a woman fixed me with blazing eyes and fairly hissed: "This boy is a *genius*. You *must* hear his work." [*Pensively.*] His mother was a gentle, beautiful woman.

ADAM. I hardly remember her.

TURAI. I can see her—very clearly—still. . . . [*He rises and goes to ADAM whom he pats affectionately on the shoulder.*] Ah, well, you're going to escape the struggles most young artists have before they reach the top. No wasting of time and brain and nerve energy for you. You've got a very clever man behind you, pushing you on.

[*Music stops.*]

MANSKY [*significantly*]. Two clever men.

TURAI. Two? [*Laughs.*] Ah, yes, of course, two. [*To ADAM.*] So run away and have your bath and sleep and dream and love and enjoy this beautiful world and all that there is in it. Happiness will make your music all the sweeter.

MANSKY. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, encouraging him to be a dreamer. He should be learning by this time that life isn't all music and roses and happiness.

TURAI. Why be in such a hurry to teach him that?

MANSKY. I'm not in a hurry.

TURAI. Then why must he be in a hurry to learn it?

ADAM [*who has run up the steps at right, pauses at the door*]. This is my room, eh?

TURAI. Whose else could it be? Have you forgotten who is sleeping or about to be sleeping on the other side of that wall?

[*He indicates the left wall.*]

ADAM. I should say I haven't.

TURAI. It's rather a good situation. Lovers—and separated by a wall. Like Pyramus and Thisbe. What is that speech of Pyramus's? [*Speaking to the left wall.*]

"And thou, oh wall, oh sweet, oh lovely wall!
Oh wicked wall, through whom
I see no bliss!"

MANSKY [*impatiently*]. Shop again! Always shop!

ADAM. And what about you two?

TURAI. We're all right. Our room is on the other side of yours.

ADAM. Are you sharing a room?

TURAI. We have to. Real collaborators never separate for a moment, or the most priceless ideas might be lost forever. Besides, I talk in my sleep. I'm told that's when I say some of my best things. Mansky is a light sleeper, and he wakes up and jots them down.

[MANSKY rises indignantly.]

ADAM. I think I'm going to like this place. Well, gentlemen, before I go, one last word. I am very fond of both of you. I am finding life very beautiful. And I am very happy.

[ADAM goes out. Once again the distant orchestra is heard.

This time playing the "Brise Argentine."]

TURAI. Which startling utterance seems to call for a glass of very old brandy.

[*He crosses to the bell rope on left wall and pulls it.*]

MANSKY. Make it two.

TURAI. It's nice to see the boy so happy. Now I'm on the shady side of fifty, I find myself full of parental affection and nobody to lavish it on. [*Reflectively.*] Yes . . . his mother was a gentle, beautiful woman. [*He goes up to window, and looks down the cliff.*] They're still dancing down there on the hotel terrace. With spot-lights on the dancers. With that dark blue sky in the back-

ground and the colored lights on the water, that wouldn't make a bad setting for a first act finale. [MANSKY who has just taken a cigarette from his case, snaps it shut with irritation.] Yes, I'm coming to think the boy's right and life is beautiful.

MANSKY. Sandor.

TURAI. Yes?

MANSKY. I didn't like to tell you before, though it really belongs to Friday, too.

TURAI. Tell me what?

MANSKY [*sits on bench with the unconscious relish of the confirmed pessimist*]. Something rather unpleasant. A little piece of news. Rather unpleasant.

[*The music has stopped. TURAI who has been at the window, turns toward MANSKY.*]

TURAI. You're a queer chap. Just when a man's feeling happy for five minutes you have to come along and take the joy out of life.

MANSKY. It concerns you, too. It's rather unpleasant.

TURAI [*going to MANSKY—speaks ironically*]. Well, come on, old friend. Ruin my evening. What is it?

MANSKY. I was looking in the visitors' book downstairs, and I saw a certain name. [*Puffs cigarette.*] Yes, it's rather unpleasant.

TURAI. Don't sit there making my flesh creep. What name did you see in the visitors' book?

MANSKY. Almady.

TURAI. The actor?

MANSKY. Yes.

TURAI. He's here?

MANSKY. He is.

TURAI. H'm. This *is*, as you say, rather unpleasant.

MANSKY. You realize what this means?

TURAL. It means that you're thoroughly happy.

MANSKY. Not at all. I may be a pessimist, but unfortunately I'm a tender-hearted pessimist. When I am proved right, I do not enjoy the fact. The fact is that Mr. Almady is here.

TURAL. But how? Why? He hasn't been invited here for ten years. I always understood he spent his summers with his wife and children at Lake Balaton.

MANSKY. I suppose he fished for an invitation. He probably had his reasons.

TURAL. Does our young friend know anything about that business?

MANSKY. He hasn't an inkling of the part Mr. Almady has played in his fiancée's life.

TURAL. Well, hang it all, it wasn't so much of a part. What does it amount to? When she was starting on the stage he gave her lessons in voice production. And then—well, it was just the usual business—the romantic leading actor and the little pupil. The sort of thing that lasts a couple of months at the outside. And, besides, it was all over and done with long ago.

MANSKY. Apparently it is *not* over and done with.

TURAL. Rot! Because by *pure* chance he happens to be in the same house?

MANSKY. It isn't pure chance. It's impure intention. Use your intelligence, man. Ilona was Almady's discovery—he taught her all she knows.

TURAL. That's a thing of the past. Ilona's intelligent. She's in love and she's engaged to be married. And you know how whole-heartedly, how passionately, an actress can be en-

gaged when she *is* engaged to be married. I'm bound to say I'm not remarkably enthusiastic about this match, but if it makes the boy happy that's the main thing. My dear chap, you're crazy. She wouldn't be such a fool . . . with a worn-out elderly actor—a father of a family—with four children. She's got too much sense.

MANSKY. I never said a word about that. I merely said I had seen his name in the visitors' book. That means he is staying here. Is that pleasant? No. It is unpleasant. That was all I said. I now say something more. We *ought* to have *wired* Ilona that we were coming to-night.

TURAL. I admit it. You're right again. So be happy. Never surprise a woman. Always wire her in plenty of time. On several occasions in a longish life I have prepared a joyful surprise for a woman, and every time I was the one surprised. The telegraph was invented for no other purpose than that women should not get surprises. [*There is a knock at the door left.*] Come in. [*A FOOTMAN enters from the hall. He is an elderly man in blue livery.*] What do you want?

FOOTMAN. What do *you* want, sir? You rang, sir.

TURAL. Oh, yes, cognac.

FOOTMAN. Any particular brand, sir?

TURAL [*to MANSKY*]. Do me a favor, old man, and go up and keep Albert talking for a few minutes. I want to have a few words with this fellow.

MANSKY. Don't drink both the brandies.

[*MANSKY goes out through door at right.*]

TURAL. What's your name?

FOOTMAN. Mine, sir?

TURAL. Yes, yours.

FOOTMAN. Johann Dwornitschek, sir.

TURAL. Johann?

FOOTMAN. Dwornitschek.

TURAL. Ah— Age?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Fifty-two, sir.

TURAL. Born?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir.

TURAL. I should have said, where were you born?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Podmokly. In Czecho-Slovakia, sir.

TURAL. Nice place?

DWORNITSCHKEK. No, sir.

TURAL. Ah—married?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir, thank you, sir.

TURAL. Wife living?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Well, in a sense. . . . She ran away with a soldier two years ago, sir—thank you, sir.

TURAL. Don't thank me—thank the soldier. You're new here, I think?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir.

TURAL. When did you come?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Last summer, sir.

TURAL. Thank you.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank *you*, sir.

TURAL. No, no. Thank *you*. You've answered my questions most patiently.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Excuse me, sir, would it be taking a liberty if I enquired why? . . .

TURAL. Why I have asked those questions? Not at all. You'll find that out later on. But don't alarm yourself. I'm not a detective. Now—Johann Dwornitschek. Here are more questions. That room next door there is Miss Ilona Szabo's?

[*He indicates the door at left to bedroom.*]

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir.

TURAL. Has she been gone long?

DWORNITSCHKEK. I have not seen her come in, sir.

TURAL. Did you see her go out?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir. They left at six o'clock this afternoon.

TURAL. They? Who?

DWORNITSCHKEK. The entire house-party, sir, including the master. They were going to San Pietro, I think, sir.

TURAL. Is that far?

DWORNITSCHKEK. The yacht would take them there in about an hour and a half. Twenty-six persons in all, sir. Supper served on board. A nice cold collation, sir.

TURAL. When do you expect them back?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Well, sir—they took a considerable quantity of liquor with them.

TURAL. The question I asked was "When do you expect them back?"

DWORNITSCHKEK. That is the question I'm answering, sir. Hardly before to-morrow morning at the earliest.

TURAL. I see. Who's in the party?

DWORNITSCHKEK. The core or center of it, if I may use the expression, sir . . .

TURAL. Certainly you may use the expression. It's a beautiful expression.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you, sir. The core or center of it is an American family, distant relatives of the master. Every time a holiday comes around, they insist on a picnic.

TURAL. What holiday is to-day?

DWORNITSCHKEK. I don't know, sir. They have two every week here. They always go off at night in the big yacht. They're quite wild about

the young lady. She sings for them on the yacht. With the gypsy band.

TURAI. Oh, they have gypsies, too?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir. Four pieces. From the Hotel. But they're not much good. No— A gypsy's not at his best, sir, on the water. Gypsies need *solid* ground.

TURAI. Solid ground—yes, of course. Well, passing over the subject of gypsies for a moment, if you don't mind—

DWORNITSCHKEK. Oh, no, sir.

TURAI. Well, then lightly passing over the subject of gypsies, do you know a Mr. Almady?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Oh, yes, indeed, sir. I know Mr. Almady. I know Mr. Almady very well. He has been here three days.

TURAI. Here in the castle?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir. In the old wing facing the park.

TURAI. That would be on this floor?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir, on this floor.

TURAI. And—he's one of the yachting party, you say?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir, along with the young lady.

TURAI. What do you mean, *along* with the young lady?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Well, sir, he escorted her to the boat. They're—you might say—sort of partners.

TURAI. How partners?

DWORNITSCHKEK. I mean, sir—well, working together—like—like—as it were, partners.

TURAI. I see. You mean partners.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir. Partners. Mr. Almady gives recitations on the boat.

TURAI. How do you know that?

DWORNITSCHKEK. They took me with them, sir, last Tuesday.

TURAI. Tuesday? It would be Tuesday.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir—Tuesday.

TURAI. All right— Thank you. . . .

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank *you*, sir. Will that be all, sir?

TURAI. Yes, that will be all.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Excuse me, sir, but you said that I would find out later on . . .

TURAI. Why I began by asking you all those personal questions.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Exactly, sir.

TURAI. Quite simple. It's a little matter of psychology. When you want a man to speak the truth, begin by making him tell you all about himself. It gives him a feeling of responsibility and makes him afraid to lie, later on. That's from a detective-play by Mansky and Turai. You can take the tip as some slight return for your trouble.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you very much, sir.

TURAI. Don't mention it.

DWORNITSCHKEK. And which shall I bring you, sir?

TURAI. Which? What which?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Which brand of cognac?

TURAI. Which brands have you?

DWORNITSCHKEK. All the best brands, sir. Hennessy, Three Star Martel, Biscuit, Dubouche, Rivière—Gardrat. . . . [*A door is heard to slam somewhere at left.*] Excuse me, sir. I rather think . . . if you would be good enough to remain quite quiet for just one moment . . . I rather fancy that's the young lady coming back now. [*They listen. From the*

adjoining room at the left a soprano voice is heard singing casually but clearly a well-known aria from an operetta.] Yes, sir. That's the young lady all right.

TURAI [*going up toward the door at right*]. It is. It's she. Splendid. Then never mind the cognac. *Champagne* is clearly indicated. My favorite brand—Mumm's Cordon Rouge. See that it's iced and hurry it along. Look sharp, man!

DWORNITSCHKEK. You wish it here—sir?

TURAI [*going out at right*]. Of course. Of course.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Very good, sir.

[*Exit DWORNITSCHKEK. He goes out through the door at left to the hall. The singing grows louder.*]

TURAI'S VOICE [*in the room at right*]. Hey! Stop that bath. You haven't time for baths now. She's back! Sh! Hurry up. Quick, both of you. [*The voices of MANSKY and ADAM are also heard.*] I tell you she *is*. She's in her room. Do be quick. I've ordered champagne. Here, I'll help you dress.

[*The door at the right is closed from the inside. From inside the adjoining room on the left the singing continues until interrupted by ALMADY'S VOICE raised in protest.*]

ALMADY'S VOICE. What do you mean by this singing? I believe you're doing it just to annoy me. [*She trills a few notes.*] You're trying to torture me.

ILONA'S VOICE. Well—it's pretty cool to come walking into my bedroom at this hour.

ALMADY'S VOICE. I came with you.

ILONA'S VOICE. Now, listen.

Everything's over and ended. I've put you out of my life forever. I'm engaged to be married and I intend to be a good little wife. You've no right to behave like this.

ALMADY'S VOICE. No right? I, who made you? I, with whom you have lived so many hours of madness—wonderful, unforgettable—

ILONA'S VOICE. Not unforgettable at all. Watch how quickly *I'm* going to forget them. Do go away, and leave me alone. Don't touch me. [*A pause.*] Stop. I won't let you kiss me. Can't you understand my fiancé will be arriving any day now?

ALMADY'S VOICE. I'll kill him.

ILONA'S VOICE. You'll do nothing of the kind. [*ALMADY sobs loudly.*] Oh, stop crying! The idea—a grown-up man, the father of a family, with four children.

ALMADY'S VOICE. But I love you so, Ilona. And you throw me over for another man. Don't you love me—still—just a little?

ILONA'S VOICE. You're nothing but a great big baby. Cheer up, do. That's better. All right, then, you may kiss me. [*A pause while they kiss.*] What are you doing? Don't take off your coat.

ALMADY'S VOICE. I must. I want to say good-bye.

ILONA'S VOICE. Well, you don't need to say it in your shirt-sleeves. [*Pause.*] Now run away and let me get some sleep. I'm worn out.

ALMADY'S VOICE. I'm only waiting till you're in bed. Is there anything to drink here?

ILONA'S VOICE. You'll find it in the anteroom. Take the whole bottle if you want to—but go. [*Pause. Shouting.*] Look on the sideboard. And stay where you are till I've got

my nightie on. Don't come *in* and don't *look*.

[*There is a silence during which the door right is opened and TURAI, ADAM, and MANSKY tiptoe in like three mischievous boys. They speak in whispers as they cross to the door to ILONA's bedroom.*]

TURAI. Hush! She's gone to bed.

ADAM. Do you think she's asleep already?

TURAI. I doubt it. Come on. Faces to the wall as close as you can get. [*They group themselves in a row as near the wall as the furniture will permit. Whispers.*] Ready? Now . . . Ilona, Ilona, Ilona . . . take the time from me.

[*Raises his hand like a conductor; at the same moment ALMADY'S VOICE is heard.*]

ALMADY'S VOICE. I worship you—I adore you.

[*The three are riveted where they stand, transfixed with amazement.*]

ILONA'S VOICE. Are you starting all over again?

ALMADY'S VOICE. Yes, I am. All over again. I love you as the church steeple loves the cloud that settles above it and floats away with the first passing breeze. I can't go on living without you. Not a week, not a day, not an hour.

[*The three men turn simultaneously.*]

ILONA'S VOICE [*contemptuously*]. Just words.

ALMADY'S VOICE. It's the truth. I'm crazy about you. And you—you've used me up and squeezed me like a lemon, and now you want to throw me away.

ILONA'S VOICE. I don't want to

throw you away, silly. Where's the sense in raving like this? Oh, come on, then. Come here and let me kiss your beautiful classic brow.

ADAM. She said—did you hear what she said?

ALMADY'S VOICE. That's not a kiss—that's a tip— Nothing but a paltry tip.

[*MANSKY sinks into chair.*]

ILONA'S VOICE. Don't shout like that.

ALMADY'S VOICE. I will shout. I'm a squeezed lemon. That's what I am—[*Sobs.*—a lemon! The whole world shall know that I'm a lemon.

ILONA'S VOICE. Get off your knees. And, oh, please, do stop crying. I can't bear it. You know how fond I am of you.

[*TURAI and MANSKY clap their hands to their heads. ADAM collapses on the piano stool.*]

ALMADY'S VOICE. Those nights of love—those flaming wonderful nights! Have you forgotten them so completely?

ADAM [*looking up*]. That's Almady.

MANSKY. You can't be sure.

TURAI [*turns to MANSKY*]. Don't be an ass. Don't try to deceive a musician about a voice. There's no use talking—the thing's a tragedy and we've got to face it.

MANSKY. Friday!

ILONA'S VOICE. Stop! Control yourself.

ALMADY'S VOICE. You ask me to control myself—when I look at *that*—at that perfect shape. The rose flush of that skin.

ILONA'S VOICE. Hands off!

ALMADY'S VOICE. My God! How

round it is! How smooth, how velvety—and how fragrant.

[*A pause.*]

ILONA'S VOICE. Don't bite!

ALMADY'S VOICE. I must—I am so hungry. . . .

TURAI [*to ADAM and patting him on the shoulder*]. I think you had better go, old man. Go and turn in in our room.

ADAM [*bitterly*]. And I thought she was a Madonna. Holding her in his arms—stroking—[*Rising in sudden fury and rushing to the door.*—God, I could kill him!

TURAI [*restraining him*]. Steady, old man, steady.

[*ADAM covers his ears with his hands.*]

ALMADY'S VOICE. Ah, well! I see I am nothing to you any more.

ILONA'S VOICE. Oh, for goodness sake. I swear that no man has ever meant so much to me as you. From the top of your head to the soles of your feet you are a *man*! Who should know that better than I?

TURAI. Come, come, my boy—let's get out of this.

MANSKY [*goes to ADAM*]. Come on, old chap. You're going to sleep in our room.

[*TURAI and MANSKY lead him to stairway.*]

ADAM. Sleep!

[*He goes out at right. TURAI and MANSKY are on the landing.*]

ILONA'S VOICE. Oh! Don't look so pathetic . . . Well, come here—kiss me.

MANSKY. I was right—We ought to have sent a telegram.

[*He goes out at right. TURAI comes down to table, lights a*

cigarette and sits on edge of table.]

ALMADY'S VOICE. I want you to remember that kiss forever.

ILONA'S VOICE. It was your old kiss. Sweet and burning—like hot punch. But do be a dear and go away now. It was mad of you to come here. If my fiancé ever hears of this I'll kill myself. Oh, damn my idiotic sentimentality for getting me into this mess. You must leave here to-morrow on the first train. He'll be here any day now. [*TURAI shifts uneasily.*] Every day I've been expecting a telegram. [*TURAI groans.*] Get out, I tell you, get out!

ALMADY'S VOICE. If you insist, dear heart, so be it! Your word is law. I am going to bed now. Farewell, dear heart. But grant me one last kiss.

TURAI [*to himself*]. Damn all fools who don't know when they've had enough.

ILONA'S VOICE. Go now—

ALMADY'S VOICE. So be it. Good night, dear heart.

ILONA'S VOICE. Good night, you baby.

[*Silence. A door is heard closing.*]

TURAI [*to himself*]. At last! "Good night, dear heart!"

[*After a moment he sits down in armchair. Pause. MANSKY reenters.*]

MANSKY [*with a gesture of inquiry toward ILONA'S room*]. This silence—what does it mean?

TURAI. This silence is a highly moral silence. The baritone hero has departed. And the fair heroine has deposited herself in bed.

MANSKY. After depositing us in

the worst mess in my whole experience. Wasn't it awful?

TURAI. Awful!

MANSKY. Smooth, round, fragrant! And he wanted to bi—oh, my God!

[*He sits.*]

TURAI. Ten minutes ago we were three happy men. That poor boy! How is he?

MANSKY. I got him to bed. Poor little Pyramus. A jolly wall, that, isn't it? Church steeple! Lemon! The damned fool.

TURAI. I can't look him in the face. That little old grandmother of his—she'd let me have it with her broomstick if she were here.

MANSKY. It's certainly the most appalling mess. You got it through your pull with the butler! Marvelous luck! Pyramus and Thisbe! "Oh sweet wall!" Well, I hope you're satisfied!

TURAI. Oh, go to the devil.

MANSKY. I don't want to be unkind, but whichever way you look at it you're to blame for this catastrophe. Why the deuce was it necessary to put the boy next door to his lady-love? Friendship is friendship, but there are limits.

TURAI. I was merely trying to be sympathetic and helpful. I meant well.

MANSKY. Never mean "well." It's fatal. See what's happened as a result. Bride gone—love gone—waltz gone—operetta gone. All a total loss. On the other hand, the dog didn't die and the coffee *was good*. Well, Friday has certainly made a nice clean, efficient job of it *this time*!

TURAI. I'm only thinking about that boy.

MANSKY. And I'm also thinking

about our operetta. The lady kissed the lemon's classic brow. After this, can you see her playing the part?

TURAI. Do stop jabbering about that side of it. I'm only interested in the boy. Did he say anything?

MANSKY. Plenty. I wish I hadn't heard it.

TURAI. What *did* he say?

MANSKY. One of his remarks was: "I'll tear up the score and kill Ilona." The round and fragrant one. And the problem that presents itself to me is this: if he tears up his music and kills the prima donna, what sort of a first night shall we have?

TURAI [*thinks a moment, then with emphasis*]. We'll have a first night, I promise you that.

MANSKY. What, after all this?

TURAI. Yes, after all *this*. Don't worry, we'll have a first night all right.

MANSKY. With that music?

TURAI. With that music and that composer and that prima donna. And I'll tell you some other things. We'll have a hit, a wedding, and a happy ending.

MANSKY. Well, of all the optimists! It's just a suggestion, but wouldn't it be a good idea if you were to mention just what you propose to *do*. This is where Sandor Turai, famous for his happy endings, had better try to surpass himself. [*Turns toward stairs.*] Get busy, my play-writing genius, and let's see how good you are.

TURAI. One can but do one's best. [*MANSKY goes out at right. A clock in the hall is heard to strike four. TURAI takes a blank sheet of music from the piano. He paces up and down in deep thought, occasionally glancing toward ILONA'S room. He*

jots down a few words. MANSKY *re-enters.*] Well, how is he?

MANSKY. Lying in bed, staring at the ceiling. That's bad. He didn't even answer my question.

TURAI. What did you ask him?

MANSKY. I said: [*Plainly.*] "Feeling better now?"

TURAI. What did you expect him to answer to a damn fool question like that?

MANSKY. Well, have *you* solved the problem?

TURAI. If I have I'm not going to tell you. You've ruined enough good ideas of mine already with your collaboration. This time I mean to work alone. Without a partner. [*Goes to table. Sits on bench.*] All I ask of you is a little information. There are a few *facts* I require.

MANSKY [*huffily*]. That's all I'm good for, is it?

TURAI. That's all. Where are Almady's wife and family now?

MANSKY. At Lake Balaton, I believe.

TURAI. Lake Balaton. Address?

MANSKY. Verona Cottage.

TURAI [*putting it down*]. Verona Cottage. What's Ilona's mother's name?

MANSKY. Adele — Alma — something.

TURAI. Well, it begins with an "A"?

MANSKY. Yes, I know that.

TURAI. Thank God! Mrs. A. Szabo. What's her address?

MANSKY. 70 Elizabeth Avenue, Fured.

TURAI. Would she be there now?

MANSKY [*petulantly*]. Oh God! How should I know? But, listen— [*Points to ILONA'S room.*] My own humble suggestion would be to wake

her up now and have a little chat.

TURAI. What about?

MANSKY [*starting across*]. I'll rout her out.

[*Goes left.*]

TURAI [*excitedly*]. For heaven's sake, no! The only thing a woman can do is deny everything. What could she deny? Could she unsay those words of hers? Gloss over that mad sensual outburst? Explain her half-hearted resistance? Of course, she might point out that it was nice of her to forbid the man to bite. No, I can't quite see where denials come in.

MANSKY. Women have lots of other tricks. Falling on their knees—fainting—bursting into tears—laughing hysterically—or just going *rigid* all over.

TURAI. That might be good enough for you or me. When you're a middle-aged dramatist, you welcome a chance to do the noble, forgiving business. It's good theatre. But that boy in there is twenty-five and he isn't a dramatist. So think again.

MANSKY [*collapsing hopelessly in armchair*]. Then there's no solution to the problem.

TURAI. There's a solution to everything—one has only to find it.

MANSKY. By Jove! Rather a good line, that.

TURAI. Not bad. Jot it down. [*MANSKY does so, on his cuff.*] And now the most important thing is—be very tactful and understanding with the boy. Sit by his bed till he falls asleep.

MANSKY. He won't sleep to-night.

TURAI. Give him something to make him . . . he must have sleep. To-morrow's going to be a big day.

One false move and he will be the center of a record scandal. It would break his heart. And on his peace of mind depends . . .

MANSKY. Our success. Capacity business. A year's run.

TURAI. Beastly words.

MANSKY. And yet only yesterday—how beautiful they sounded!

TURAI. Go away. I'll take on this job. [*Rises.*] Leave everything to me, and base your confidence on past experience. Which shows the moment *you* stop trying to help me, I can solve anything.

MANSKY [*bows stiffly and turns toward stairs*]. Thank you, my dear fellow.

TURAI. Not at all.

MANSKY. Good night.

TURAI. Good night. See you tomorrow. Till then, don't leave him for an instant. That's official. I've enjoyed our little talk so much. Good night.

MANSKY. Good night.

[*Goes out at right.* TURAI *goes to table, sits and jots down some more notes. There is a knock at door left to hall.*]

TURAI. Come in.

[DWORKITSCHKEK *enters with cooler and champagne, four glasses on a tray.*]

DWORKITSCHKEK. The champagne, sir. Mumm's Cordon Rouge—just as you ordered.

TURAI [*motioning it away*]. 'Mm, yes. But that was a long time ago. A very long time ago. Since then the world has changed quite a good deal. However, the motto of the Turai is: "Never refuse champagne"; so put it down.

[DWORKITSCHKEK *places tray on*

the table and the cooler on the floor.]

DWORKITSCHKEK. Will four glasses be sufficient, sir?

TURAI. Three more than sufficient.

[DWORKITSCHKEK *leaves one glass on the tray before TURAI, and places the other three on the table. There is a pause.*

TURAI *stares at him.*]

DWORKITSCHKEK. Something in the expression of your eye, sir, tells me that you are trying to remember my name.

TURAI. Quite right. What is it?

DWORKITSCHKEK. Dwornitschek, sir.

TURAI. Still Dwornitschek? Well, well! All right, Dwornitschek, you can go to bed.

DWORKITSCHKEK. At what hour would you desire breakfast, sir?

TURAI. What time is it now?—

DWORKITSCHKEK. Quarter past four, sir.

TURAI. Then let us say at seven—or perhaps six.

DWORKITSCHKEK. Anything special that you fancy, sir?

TURAI [*in offhand way*]. No. Just ham, eggs, cold chicken, smoked salmon, cold beef, bacon, butter, milk, honey, jam, rolls and tea.

DWORKITSCHKEK. With lemon?

TURAI [*shouts with revulsion*]. No! [*Quietly.*] No—with rum.

DWORKITSCHKEK [*starts to go*]. Very good, sir. At six precisely.

TURAI. Tell me, Dwornitschek, when do you sleep?

DWORKITSCHKEK. In the winter, sir.

TURAI. What are you waiting for?

DWORKITSCHKEK. I was wondering if there were any more questions you desired to ask me, sir.

TURAI. No, thank you.

DWORNITSCHKE. Thank you, sir.

TURAI. No, no, thank you.

DWORNITSCHKE. I love being asked questions, sir. It shows that gentlemen take an interest.

TURAI. You mean in Dwornitschek, the man? As opposed to Dwornitschek, the servant?

DWORNITSCHKE. Yes, sir. You are sure you have nothing more to ask, sir? It would be a treat for me.

TURAI. Nothing more, thanks. My stock of knowledge for to-day is complete. I wish it weren't.

DWORNITSCHKE. Then I will bid you good night, sir.

[Starts to go.]

TURAI. Good night. . . . One moment! There is one other thing. Where is the writing paper? And I'd like some telegraph blanks, too. And ink, and also a pen.

DWORNITSCHKE. The writing materials are in the library, sir, but I can bring them to you here.

[Starts to go.]

TURAI. Don't bother. I'll do my

writing in the library. It's a good idea. No chance of being interrupted.

[Rises and goes up the first step.]

DWORNITSCHKE. I'll go and turn on the lights, sir.

TURAI. One moment. [Points to champagne.] That—can come, too.

DWORNITSCHKE. Very good, sir.

[Takes cooler and one glass.]

TURAI [pausing]. After you.

DWORNITSCHKE. Oh no, sir.

TURAI. My dear Dwornitschek, I insist. You're sure that really is your name?

DWORNITSCHKE. Oh yes, sir.

TURAI. I only wondered. Thank you.

DWORNITSCHKE. Thank you, sir.

TURAI. No, no. Thank you.

[DWORNITSCHKE goes out.

TURAI puffs his cigarette, gazes for a moment at the wall of ILONA's room, sighs and then goes out at left as]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO

[SCENE: As the curtain rises a clock in the hall is heard to strike six. Golden sunlight pours in the windows. The Mediterranean is as blue as tradition has painted it. SANDOR TURAI, now jauntily attired in white flannels, is seated in the arm-chair at the center, with the loose leaves of a manuscript before him. As the clock stops striking, the door at left to the hall is opened by DWORNITSCHKE, who comes down to TURAI bringing a newspaper on a salver. DWORNITSCHKE is followed by two lackeys in livery, each carrying an enormous silver tray piled

high with TURAI's breakfast. During the dialogue that follows, the lackeys place the breakfast upon the long table at the right. This done, one of them stands at attention while the other goes up to the window, opens it, steps out on the balcony and lowers an awning which shuts off some of the now too brilliant sunlight.]

DWORNITSCHKE. Good morning, sir.

TURAI. Good morning. What's this?

DWORNITSCHKE. Morning paper, sir.

TURAI. You've read it, of course?

DWORNITSCHKE. Oh yes, sir.

TURAI. Anything about me in it?

DWORNITSCHKE. No, sir.

TURAI. Then take it away.

[DWORNITSCHKE gives silver with the newspaper to one of the lackeys and motions both off.]

DWORNITSCHKE. Let me see, sir, I think it was ham, eggs, cold chicken, smoked salmon, cold beef, bacon, butter, milk, honey, jam and rolls that you ordered, was it not?

TURAI. Quite right.

DWORNITSCHKE. And tea with lemon.

TURAI [*with revulsion*]. Not lemon!

DWORNITSCHKE. There's rum, sir—or cognac, if you prefer.

TURAI. Pardon my emotion—I loathe lemons.

DWORNITSCHKE. Yes, sir. Many people do. I had an aunt—

TURAI. Suppose we don't talk about your aunt just for the moment.

DWORNITSCHKE. Very good, sir.

TURAI. Later on, perhaps.

DWORNITSCHKE. At any time that suits you, sir.

TURAI. You must make allowances for the artistic temperament. When I have been sitting up all night writing, I somehow don't feel in the vein for discussing other people's aunts. You understand, don't you?

DWORNITSCHKE. I quite understand, sir.

[TURAI has risen and crossed to the table, upon which he has put the manuscript. He now goes round to the right side where his place is set and examines the breakfast with evident satisfaction. He lifts

the covers from several silver dishes, looks at their contents with pleasure, and smiles at DWORNITSCHKE with approval.]

TURAI. You're really a wonderful fellow. How on earth did you manage not to forget anything?

DWORNITSCHKE. It was a labor of love, sir. My heart is in that breakfast.

TURAI [*sitting down*]. Your heart, too? [*After he has taken a sip of tea.*] Ah! that puts new life into a man.

DWORNITSCHKE. You must have had very little sleep, sir.

TURAI. Not much.

DWORNITSCHKE. I hadn't any.

TURAI. Yes, I remember you told me you were essentially a hibernating animal.

DWORNITSCHKE. Nobody else is stirring as yet. This is the time when I sometimes manage to lie down myself for a few moments.

TURAI. Then you will get some sleep, after all?

DWORNITSCHKE. Just forty winks, sir. That's the advantage of being by the sea. Gentlemen stay in bed till noon. Very different from the mountains.

TURAI [*who throughout this dialogue is eating and drinking with relish and satisfaction*]. They get up early in the mountains, eh?

DWORNITSCHKE. At about five or four-thirty. They like to go climbing. But there's always a bright side, sir; they go to bed at nine.

TURAI. You know, you're broadening my mind tremendously. Every time I see you, I learn something new.

DWORNITSCHKE. If it's not a

liberty, sir, I should like to say something.

TURAI. I'll bet it's something good. Go on.

DWORNITSCHKEK. You ought to take more care of your health, sir. You don't get enough sleep.

TURAI. I don't?

DWORNITSCHKEK. And you smoke too much, sir. I found at least fifty cigarette butts in the ash-tray in the library.

TURAI. Wrong. Thirty-seven.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Too many, sir.

TURAI. What's your daily allowance?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Fifteen, sir.

TURAI. You'll live to be a hundred.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you—is that a medical opinion, sir?

TURAI. No—just a hope. This weary world needs men like you.

DWORNITSCHKEK. No, no, sir. Like you.

TURAI. Well, shall we say like both of us?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Would it be a liberty, sir, if I expressed the opinion that you have a heart of gold?

TURAI. Not at all. Thank you very much.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you, sir.

TURAI. No, no. Thank you.

DWORNITSCHKEK. It's the way you take an interest that touches a man, sir. I wish there was something I could do for you.

TURAI. At the moment, I think the best thing you can do for me is to leave me alone. And if any one asks for me, tell them I'm sleeping and must not be disturbed. Understand?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Oh, yes, indeed, sir.

[DWORNITSCHKEK starts to exit.

TURAI stops him. TURAI pantomimes "Wait a minute. I must remember your name." He registers despair. DWORNITSCHKEK smiles indulgently and whispers "Dwornitschek."]

TURAI. Thank you.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you, sir.

[He goes out at the left to hall.

TURAI rises, listens at staircase, then goes to the telephone and takes up the receiver.]

TURAI. Hello. Will you give me Miss Ilona Szabo's room?

[He waits. Telephone bell rings loudly in the room at the left.

After a pause it rings again.]

ILONA'S VOICE [sleepily].. Yes???

TURAI [speaks into telephone, very mildly]. Hello.

ILONA'S VOICE. HELLO!!!

TURAI [softly]. Hello.

ILONA'S VOICE. WHO'S THAT?

TURAI. The unfeeling brute who has aroused you from your slumber is known to the police as Sandor Turai.

ILONA'S VOICE [changing in a flash, delighted]. Sandor! Dear old Sandor!

TURAI. Well, and how's the prima donna?

ILONA'S VOICE. Where are you speaking from?

TURAI. Next door.

ILONA'S VOICE. What!

TURAI. I thought you'd be surprised. I'm in the next room.

ILONA'S VOICE. How on earth?—

TURAI. My dear little Ilona, let's postpone the explanations. I want to see you at once—immediately.

ILONA'S VOICE [anxiously]. You're frightening me. What is it?

TURAI [deliberately puts down the

receiver and speaks toward the wall]. Don't get alarmed. [*Lights cigarette at piano*.] Come in here at once. This minute.

ILONA'S VOICE. This minute?

TURAI. This very minute. [*Taps door at left*.] Open this door. Put something on.

ILONA'S VOICE. What?

TURAI. Anything you have.

ILONA'S VOICE. Do what? I can't hear. There must be something wrong with the telephone.

TURAI [*goes to the wall*]. Put something on and come in here at once. Can you hear better now?

ILONA'S VOICE. Yes, I can hear beautifully now.

TURAI. Good.

ILONA'S VOICE. I'll be right in. [*TURAI goes back to the telephone and hangs up the receiver. There is a short pause. Then the door at left to bedroom is thrown open and ILONA SZABO enters. She is an extraordinarily beautiful, blonde young woman. Having just got out of bed and slipped a flimsy alluring negligée over her nightie, she is somewhat disheveled. Her golden hair is awry. Moreover she is, at the moment, more than anxious; her apprehension and fright are close to panic.*] Sandor—what is it? I feel something terrible has happened. What's the matter? When did you get here?

TURAI [*calmly*]. Sit down, my dear. You and I have got to do some quick talking.

ILONA. *But what's happened?* For heaven's sake, tell me!

TURAI. Sit down.

ILONA. Why?

TURAI. Because if you don't sit down now, you'll sit down later on when you hear what I've got to say

—and you'll sit down *hard*. Better do it gracefully while you can.

[*He pushes her gently into the armchair at center.*]

ILONA. I don't understand.

TURAI. You will. My dear little Ilona, in spite of the fact that you are engaged to my young friend Adam, you are still carrying on an affair with Mr. Almady.

ILONA [*with indignation*]. It's an outrageous lie.

TURAI. Good! I thought you were going to say it was none of my business.

ILONA. I couldn't say that, because you're Albert's guardian, guide, philosopher and friend and God knows what else. And you're a friend of *mine* and write plays for me. So I simply say that it's a lie.

TURAI. I'm glad you do, because it's an observation which I can answer. I've been in this room since last night and the walls in this new wing are as thin as paper.

ILONA [*looks at walls. As the truth dawns upon her she is horrified*]. Good God!

TURAI. "Lemon." [*ILONA hides her face.*] "Lemon. . . Church steeple." Well, dear Ilona. Suppose we talk this over? Something's got to be done—and done quickly.

ILONA. If you heard, you heard what *I* said, too.

TURAI. Every word.

ILONA. Then you know that I told him to get out—and he's *getting* out to-day. At twelve o'clock. So, if you don't say anything—and of course you won't . . .

TURAI. Not quite so fast, please. If the thing were as simple as that, you would never have known from me that I had overheard you. I

regret to say matters are much more unpleasant.

ILONA [*sinking back in chair*]. My God! You don't mean? . . .

TURAI. I see you've guessed.

ILONA. Did—did—I can't say it.

TURAI. I will say it for you. Yes, the boy *did* hear it, too.

ILONA [*looks at TURAI*]. God! . . . He's *here* then?

TURAI. He is here.

ILONA. Where?

TURAI. Sh! He's up in Mansky's room—asleep. And last night he was in this room—awake.

ILONA [*rises, goes toward her room*]. I'll take veronal, all there is in my bottle.

TURAI. That's not enough.

ILONA [*turns*]. Ten ounces?

TURAI. I was not referring to the veronal. I mean suicide is no solution.

ILONA. There isn't any solution that I could survive. [*Dramatically.*] There are only two things I can possibly do—kill myself or deny the whole story.

TURAI. Deny the whole story? Do you suppose if it were just a question of telling lies, I would have troubled you? I'd have told them myself long ago.

ILONA. Then we come back to the veronal.

TURAI. Exactly. We come back to the veronal—and find it safely tucked away in its bottle.

ILONA. Well, what *do* you suggest?

TURAI. I have my plan. And all I ask of you is not to hinder it.

ILONA [*almost crying*]. You know I worship Albert. If anybody knows that, you do. I've been a different woman since I met him. He looks

on me as a saint. [*TURAI gives her a quick ironic glance.*] And he's right. I *have* turned into a saint since I began to love him. It was the only thing I wanted to do in life—to keep straight for his sake. I was so happy. [*She sinks into arm-chair crying.*] I love him so.

TURAI. And yet you can't be true to him.

ILONA [*indignantly*]. You've no right to say that. It was nothing but my damned sentimentality. You know very well that affair with that beast Almady didn't last a couple of months. First he gave me breathing lessons and taught me how to throw my voice—

TURAI [*with a significant glance*]. Yes, he taught you that, all right.

ILONA. I'm just a victim of my kind heart. I thought I was rid of him, but he got himself invited here. And he's always bursting into tears. A woman hates to see a man cry. He stuck to me like a leech. [*Rises and stalks about hysterically.*] But why on earth would I want to start in with him again? I give you my word, Sandor, that last night was simply—like the last dying vibrations of a high note.

TURAI. You'd have done better to stop vibrating a little earlier. Still, there it is. What we've got to do now is—get you out of the mess.

ILONA [*runs across to TURAI and throws herself on her knees, clasping him beseechingly.*] Sandor! Sandor darling! Do you really think you *can*?

TURAI. Yes, I can. But don't think I'm doing it for your sake, my dear; not for the sake of your beautiful eyes. You deserve to be drawn and quartered. I'm doing it for *that*

poor decent boy who still retains a few ideals in this unpleasant world. Yes, my dear Ilona, I think I must ask you to be a little ashamed of yourself.

ILONA [*bitterly*]. Don't worry. [*Rises.*] I am. What can I do?

TURAI [*goes to telephone*]. I am just going to tell you. And you won't enjoy it. Still, good medicine's rarely pleasant. [*Picks up receiver.*] Hello. [*To ILONA.*] What's the number of Almady's room?

ILONA [*apprehensively*]. What do you want with him?

TURAI [*into the telephone*]. Give me Mr. Almady's room, please. [*Pause.*] Never mind about all that, my good man. I don't care what instructions he left—call him. And go on ringing till he answers. It's a matter of life and death.

ILONA. What are you doing?

TURAI [*in telephone*]. Mr. Almady? Yes, yes, I know you gave instructions. . . . Will you please be quiet for a moment? . . . This is Sandor Turai speaking. Here in the new wing. . . . Last night, by car. . . . Good morning—you were awake already! Capital! Would you mind coming here at once? Room number four. . . . Yes, I mean NOW, right away. . . . Yes, matter of life and death was what I said, but I made a slight error. I should have said a matter of death—yes, yes, this very minute—right. [*He hangs up the receiver. ILONA starts to go.*] Where are you off to?

ILONA. If Almady is coming here?

TURAI. You will kindly stay just where you were.

ILONA [*looking toward ALBERT'S bedroom at right, crying*]. He looked on me as a saint. He thought I was

everything that was fine and pure. He called me his Madonna.

TURAI. You should have thought of that a long time ago.

ILONA. Tell me—what did Albert say?

TURAI. I wouldn't ask that if I were you.

ILONA. God! What was the plan you said you had? . . . Can't you speak?

TURAI. Patience.

ILONA. It's too cruel. . . . Just because I hate hurting people's feelings . . .

[*She breaks off as a knock sounds on the door left to hall.*]

TURAI. Come in.

[*ALMADY, who enters, is also in a state of nervous apprehension. He is attired in elaborate, not to say loud, house pajamas. A tall and but recently handsome man, now well into middle age. ALMADY is first, last and always the actor. He dramatizes every moment of his existence. He does not walk, he struts; he does not talk, he declaims.*]

ALMADY. Good morning. [*Sees ILONA, surprised.*] Hulllo. You here?

TURAI. Yes, she's here.

ALMADY. But what's the matter? Has something happened?

ILONA. Oh, do sit down.

TURAI [*grimly*]. He'll sit down quite soon enough. I'm not afraid of his not sitting down.

ALMADY [*to TURAI*]. You'll forgive me if I seem nervous. . . .

TURAI. Glass of brandy?

ALMADY. Thank you. [*Deliberately.*] Never in the morning.

TURAI. Mr. Almady, you are a

married man and the father of a family. And you are forcing your attentions on another man's fiancée.

ALMADY [*indignantly*]. It's an outrageous lie.

TURAI. Good. I thought you were going to say it was none of my business. You would have been quite right. But a lie—no, I'm afraid that won't do.

ALMADY [*aggressively*]. Mr. Turai, I would have you know—

TURAI. Shut up!

ALMADY [*outraged*]. "Shut up!"

TURAI [*significantly*]. "Lemon!"
[ALMADY *sits down abruptly*.] I told you he'd sit down. [ALMADY *looks at the left wall*.] Yes, quite right. It's as thin as paper.

ALMADY [*rises*]. Now come, Mr. Turai, between two gentlemen. . . .

TURAI. I beg your pardon?

ALMADY. As one gentleman to another, I ask your discretion. . . .

TURAI. Sit down.

ALMADY [*sitting down anxiously*]. Why? Is there something else coming?

TURAI [*crosses to right and listens at staircase*]. Yes, there is something else coming. Are you sitting down?

ALMADY. Yes.

TURAI. Then listen. I wasn't the only one who heard everything. Her fiancé was in this room with me at the time, and his hearing is excellent.

ALMADY [*strangling*]. Brandy!

TURAI [*pouring it out*]. In the morning?

[*Gives ALMADY the brandy.*]

ALMADY. I always take it in the morning.

[*He gulps it down.*]

ILONA. Well, what are you going to do now, you miserable idiot, you? You see what you've done. You've

driven me to suicide. Oh, God! I shall die. I shall die!

ALMADY [*rising melodramatically*]. I'll die with you!

ILONA. I don't want you! I'm going to die alone.

ALMADY [*pompously*]. I am ready to give him satisfaction.

TURAI. That's the last straw. [*As ALMADY starts to speak*.] I'll tell you what you are going to do. You are going to do just as I order.

ALMADY [*starting up*]. Order?

TURAI. Sit down.

[ALMADY *sits down*.]

ILONA. Yes—order. [*To TURAI—rapidly*.] Tell us, please. Never mind how much he rants.

ALMADY [*indignantly*]. Rants! You dare to criticize my diction?

TURAI. Oh! Damn your diction! Just thank your stars that I'm going to get you out of this. A married man! Father of a family. With four children at home—four little lemons! [ALMADY *rises*.] One word from you, and this telegram, all ready and written, goes off to your wife.

[ALMADY *looks again at wall and groans*.]

ILONA. Look at him. Don't look at the wall. Last night was the time to have done that.

TURAI. In that room next door—last night—something occurred.

ILONA [*ashamed*]. Yes, yes, please. We know what occurred.

TURAI. That is just what you don't know. You are now going to hear. What occurred was the rehearsal of a play. Do you grasp my meaning?

ILONA. In the middle of the night?

TURAI. In the middle of the night.

ALMADY. How do you mean—the rehearsal of a play?

TURAI. Your very loud remarks, so loud that they actually penetrated the wall—were dialogue from a play. Now, do you understand?

ILONA. I do. [*To ALMADY.*] Don't you—idiot? [*Rises.*] It's the most marvelous, wonderful idea, you old darling. . . .

[*She is just about to embrace*

TURAI, *when she stops in consternation.*]

TURAI. What's the matter?

ILONA. It's no good. He'd never believe it.

TURAI. Why wouldn't he believe it?

ILONA. Where on earth is there a play with lines in it like those?

TURAI. Where? [*Picking up pile of papers from the table.*] Here.

ILONA. What do you mean?

TURAI [*pointing*]. Here you are. Here's the play. This is it.

ILONA. Who wrote it?

TURAI. I did. Don't stare at me, my dear child, with those starry eyes of blue. [*Sits on bench.*] Rather ask when I wrote it.

ILONA. When could you have written it?

TURAI. This morning—between four and six. After all, one is either a playwright or one isn't. Half of it I heard through the wall; the other half I wrote to fit. (In this life, every one has to fight with his own weapons. My weapon is the pen! And, on this occasion I hope it will prove considerably mightier than the sword.) I am feeling this morning like an acrobat, who for once has the chance to use his skill to save a life. I don't suppose any play has ever yet been written with such purely altruistic motives. Well, there you

are. There's the play. Read it—learn it and play it.

[*He gives her the manuscript.*]

ILONA. Play it?

TURAI. Naturally you must play it. How else can you make him believe without a shadow of doubt that what you were saying last night was just dialogue? Off you go. Dress rehearsal early this evening. Opening to-night.

ALMADY. To-night? But where?

TURAI. At the concert, of course. After dinner in the ballroom. [*To ILONA.*] You're down on the program already for something or other.

ILONA. A couple of songs. [*Contemptuously.*] He's to recite some poems.

TURAI. Then there'll be a slight change in the program. He'll act with you instead—a one-act play.

ILONA [*looking at script*]. But how on earth can I learn all this by to-night?

[*ALMADY goes to window.*]

TURAI. Well, really! Last night you knew it well enough. [*ALMADY sighs deeply.*] What's the matter with you?

ALMADY [*comes down*]. Mr. Turai, that was a sigh of relief. Do you *know* my wife?

TURAI. I do. Didn't I tell you that it was a matter of death?

ALMADY. How can I ever thank you?

[*He holds out his hand. TURAI ignores it.*]

TURAI. Don't bother to try. If you think I'm doing this for your sake, my good man, you're greatly mistaken. Unfortunately, my life-saving apparatus is so constructed that you automatically have to be rescued, too.

ILONA. Oh, but listen. . . .

TURAI. Now what is it?

ILONA. What earthly reason could we have had for rehearsing at three in the morning?

TURAI. That's what I ask myself, but I answer myself—quite simple. You had to play the thing to-night. You'd lost a lot of time on a picnic. Every moment was precious. You were so conscientious that when you came home you insisted on rehearsing even though it was three o'clock in the morning.

ILONA. Well, we'd better go and start studying at once. I'm a very slow studier.

TURAI. One minute. Don't get excited. Who's supposed to be running this concert?

ILONA. The Count's secretary, Mr. Mell.

TURAI. We must notify him of this change in the program. [*Goes to telephone.*] Hello. . . . Give me Mr. Mell's room, please.

ILONA. But he'll be asleep.

TURAI. Oh, no, my dear. Not after this telephone bell has rung once or twice. [*He hands ILONA the receiver.*] There you are—ladies first.

ILONA [*taking telephone*]. But what am I to say?

TURAI. Keep calm. I'll prompt you.

ILONA. Hello! Is that Mr. Mell? Yes, it is early, isn't it?

[*She looks at TURAI for directions.*]

TURAI. Good morning.

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. Good morning.

TURAI. How did you sleep?

ILONA [*her hand over the receiver*].

I *can't* say that. The poor man is furious.

TURAI [*shrugging*]. Use your own judgment, then.

ILONA [*into the telephone in her most seductive manner*]. Dear Mr. Mell! [*Coos.*] I'm so dreadfully sorry to wake you up at this hour, but I wanted to tell you that there will be a little change in the program to-night. I'm sure the Count will be pleased. I'm sure you will be pleased. I'm sure the audience will be pleased.

TURAI. Unanimous.

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. Instead of working alone, I'm going to appear with Mr. Almady. Yes, Mr. Almady. In an extremely witty, charming, brilliant little duologue. [*TURAI bows. ILONA listens at the telephone for a moment. Then she turns to TURAI and asks, as if she were still speaking to MELL.*] What kind of a play is it?

TURAI. French.

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. French. [*As before.*] Who wrote it?

TURAI. Gerald.

ILONA. Gerald, I believe. . . .

[*Pause.*] Oh, isn't that nice!

TURAI [*apprehensive*]. What's nice?

ILONA [*hand over receiver*]. He says he knows every line that Gerald ever wrote.

TURAI. Then it's by Sardou.

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. No, I'm sorry. I've just been looking at the script again. It's not by Gerald; it's by Sardou.

TURAI. The Great Sardou.

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. The Great Sardou! . . . Indeed?

TURAI. How is he up on Sardou?

ILONA [*covering receiver*]. He says

the only thing of Sardou's he knows is "Hedda Gabler."

TURAL [*delighted*]. That's the man for us!

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. That's the man for us.

TURAL. No, no, no! That last remark was supposed to be confidential.

ILONA. Good-bye, and thank you so much, Mr. Mell. You've been so sweet. . . . Oh, of course—as if we'd dream of having anybody but you as a prompter! . . . The title?

TURAL. A tooth for a tooth!

ILONA [*into the telephone*]. A truth . . .

TURAL. Tooth, tooth.

ILONA. A tooth for a tooth. . . . Yes, isn't it? Quite snappy. [*Coos.*] Good-bye. [*She hangs up receiver and turns to TURAL.*] Why a French piece?

TURAL. Merely to ensure that nobody will know who wrote it. That's the beauty of French literature—there's such a lot of it. Besides, one has one's conscience. I've stolen so much from the French in my time that it's only fair I should give *them* something for a change. And now that everything seems to be working out all right, let me say with all the emphasis at my disposal—get out. Go and study! [*To ALMADY.*] And—so that no one will recognize my handwriting—you have got to copy out the script.

ALMADY. All of it?

TURAL. From beginning to end.

ALMADY. You think of everything.

TURAL. Unlike a certain Southern fruit.

ILONA [*who has been looking through the script*]. Oh, but this isn't right.

TURAL. What isn't?

ILONA. This line. You make me say "Your kiss is revolting to me." What I really said was . . .

TURAL. "That was your old kiss. Sweet and burning like hot punch." I know. My memory is excellent. But fortunately we got the boy out of the room before you got that far.

ALMADY. And may I be permitted to inquire *why* my kiss should be described as revolting?

TURAL. The line occurs in the second part of the play, where I was relying on my native inspiration.

ALMADY. You call my kiss revolting? I wish to know why.

TURAL. That is how I *see* it. I am the author of this play, and that is my opinion of your kiss.

[ALMADY goes up stage in a huff.]

ILONA. I do think you might have made some noise to warn us. Why couldn't you have coughed or something?

TURAL. Suppose I had, what should I have been able to do *now*? You overlook the fact that your very first words, my dear Ilona, left no room for misunderstanding. If I had stopped you then nothing could have averted the tragedy.

ALMADY [*coming down mollified*]. What a brain!

TURAL. You flatter me!

ILONA. No, he doesn't. He's right for once. Did this idea come to you the moment you heard us?

TURAL. No, I got it from you.

ILONA. From us?

TURAL. Yes, stupid of me, I admit. You see, I always assume the best of my fellowmen. And just for a minute I did think that you really

were acting. Later on, I realized my mistake.

ILONA. You thought we were acting. Why?

TURAI. Because it all sounded so artificial. No ring of conviction. I refer particularly to the more erotic passages.

ILONA. I don't wonder. Considering I don't care one little bit for the man. . . .

ALMADY. What's that?

ILONA. You heard.

ALMADY. You don't love me?

ILONA. No.

ALMADY [*furiously*]. So you were lying.

ILONA. Yes.

ALMADY. Just to get rid of me?

ILONA [*with loathing, vehemently*]. Yes. I hate the sight of you!

ALMADY [*bitterly*]. Serpent!

ILONA. I'd like to murder you! [ALMADY *bursts into ludicrous sobs*]. My God!—this is the limit!

TURAI. If you want to cry all over any one, cry all over me. I like it. It's like a tonic to me.

ALMADY. What made you realize that we were not acting?

TURAI. The disgusting, sloppy way you began carrying on. No author living would dare put slush like that in the mouth of an actor who was supposed to be making love.

ALMADY. Sloppy?

TURAI. Beyond words.

ALMADY [*with indignation*]. Allow me to inform you—

TURAI. Shut up!

ALMADY [*his dignity collapsing*]. Oh, very well.

TURAI. My friends may be here any minute now. Please go and study your parts. [To ILONA, who has been

turning over the leaves of the script.] That's a bit you'll have to learn particularly well.

ILONA. Which?

TURAI [*pointing to manuscript*]. These lines here. This loathsome series of speeches—the ones we overheard last night. [Points.] From there to there.

[ALMADY *looks at script*.]

ILONA [*reads*]. Odd—I hardly remember—

TURAI. I do. Nor is your fiancé likely to have forgotten.

ILONA [*reading*]. "I worship you. I adore you. I love you as the church steeple loves the cloud that settles on its summit." [ALMADY *turns away, embarrassed*.] Just words!

ALMADY [*takes script*]. "You have used me up and squeezed me like a lemon."

ILONA [*takes script*]. Yes, now I remember—

ALMADY. It's all down, word for word.

[TURAI *takes script*.]

TURAI. Yes, the passage is underlined in red ink. Three pages—here—from page sixteen. It goes on "Come here and let me kiss that beautiful classic brow"—and then—this is the worst bit, here—this mad outburst of sensuality— [Reads rapidly.] "When I look at *that*—at the perfect shape. The rose flush of that skin— Just to stroke it! . . .

ILONA. Yes, but I . . .

TURAI. I know, I know. [Reads.] "Hands off!" you said. But he couldn't have obeyed you for he goes on "My God! How round it is! How smooth! How velvety!" And then I'm afraid he must have got very close indeed for he adds, "And

how fragrant." That's right, isn't it?

ALMADY. Quite right. It *was* fragrant.

ILONA. But I . . .

TURAI. No, my dear, you did *not*. There was a complete silence until you exclaimed, "You mustn't bite. . . ." [*Both turn away.*] Yes, I should think you *would* be ashamed of yourselves. [*He gives ILONA the script.*] All right, then; copy it out and learn it. If you ever studied parts in your lives, study these. We'll have the dress rehearsal at seven-thirty sharp, here in this room. I'll give you a run through. And after dinner, first performance. And now—?

ILONA. Out we go, eh?

TURAI. You took the words out of my mouth. And don't forget, we've not seen each other for three months.

ILONA. All right—three months.

ALMADY [*going out*]. A colossal brain!

[*They bow.*]

TURAI. I thank you.

[ALMADY and ILONA go into her room. TURAI sits down and resumes his interrupted breakfast. Throughout the following scene he goes on eating quietly, deliberately, and with a good appetite. MANSKY enters at right, also in white flannels, but looking more doleful and dejected than ever.]

MANSKY. Have you been up long?

TURAI. I couldn't sleep. [*He goes on eating.*] How's our infant?

MANSKY. Woke up a moment ago. I left him dressing.

TURAI. You had breakfast yet?

MANSKY. Not a mouthful. Couldn't touch it. You seem to have no difficulty in putting it away.

TURAI [*with mock sadness*]. One must keep up one's strength.

MANSKY. I'm amazed, and, if I may say so, a little shocked. Sitting there gorging as if nothing had happened. Can't you realize we're absolutely ruined? I'm positively ill thinking about it.

TURAI [*mysteriously*]. Shall I let you into a secret, Mansky?

MANSKY [*with excited anticipation*]. Yes. Tell me.

TURAI [*with great deliberation*]. I am a man who weighs his words. I do not speak lightly. And I say to you solemnly, my friend—[*Dramatic pause.*—that this is the best bit of ham I've ever tasted.

MANSKY [*furious*]. Bah!

[*Crosses left to a mirror.*]

TURAI [*continuing as before*]. Juicy—nutty—positively good. [*Solicitously*]. Did the boy sleep at all?

MANSKY. He dropped off about daylight out of sheer exhaustion. [*Looks in the glass.*] I'm pale.

TURAI. Say anything?

MANSKY. Not a word. Just stared at the ceiling. You know, that's bad.

TURAI. Ceilings aren't so bad. Walls are much worse.

MANSKY. What I can't understand is why a magnificent place like this should have walls like tissue-paper.

TURAI. Ah! These are deep waters.

MANSKY [*irritated*]. Do stop eating!

TURAI. But I haven't finished.

MANSKY. Gobble—gobble—gobble! [*Looks in the glass.*] My God, I am pale!

TURAI. Suits you. Intellectual pallor.

MANSKY [*crosses to TURAI*]. What about that solution you were hinting at last night?

TURAI. There were several possibilities. I considered them all thoroughly in the night watches—while you lay snoring in your bed. Oh, yes, I heard you while I was changing my clothes. [*Points to the table.*] Telegrams, letters, all ready. Finally I hit on the best and simplest plan.

MANSKY. Which is?

TURAI. I'm going to do everything possible to make him break with her.

MANSKY. What for?

TURAI. Because that's the surest way of bringing them together. If he casts her off forever—in two weeks he'll be rushing after her and falling at her feet. The lady—after a little coaxing—will allow herself to melt. He will coax a little more. She will melt a little more. Finally she will melt altogether—and the curtain will fall on the lovers' slow embrace.

MANSKY [*with cumulative contempt*]. You thought of that in the night, did you?

TURAI. I did.

MANSKY. All by yourself?

TURAI. All by myself?

MANSKY. Well!!! I've noticed all this past year that you've been slipping. I realize now, that you've completely lost your grip. Our last show died the death simply because you would write psychology into it. And now you've become simply driveling. It's a great shock to me. Do you know what's happening? Little by little you're beginning to think—and that spells ruin for both of us. Haven't you grasped yet what a

frightful knock-down blow last night's affair was to that boy?

TURAI. Sh! Sh! [*Listens, pointing to the door right.*] Here he is! [*Enter ADAM. He is also in white flannels. Very solemn and miserable. Pause. He passes them without a word and goes to balcony.*] Hullo! Not even a good morning?

ADAM. Oh, good morning.

[*TURAI rises; MANSKY looks longingly at breakfast things.*]

MANSKY [*to ADAM with his best bedside manner*]. Had breakfast?

ADAM. No.

[*MANSKY goes above table and sits down; starts to eat.*]

TURAI [*to ADAM*]. Sleep?

ADAM. No.

TURAI. Nor did I. [*ADAM looks at left wall.*] No. Nothing from there. Not another sound. He left and she went to sleep. I didn't on your account. [*To MANSKY.*] Hullo! Appetite picking up?

MANSKY [*starting guiltily and pushing his plate away*]. No. I can't swallow. Too nervous. I'm a wreck.

TURAI. Try the ham.

ADAM [*goes to TURAI*]. I—my dear Uncle Sandor—I don't want to be a burden to you two any longer—now that my life has been blown to bits.

TURAI. Come, come, come!

ADAM. I mean it. I know what I'm talking about. There's a great crack in my heart, and—

TURAI. Come now—be a man. We had enough of that sort of talk last night. Tell me just what is it you want to do?

ADAM. Before anything else, I want to get away from this place.

TURAI. Quite reasonable. And then?

ADAM. Then I'll tear up the music I wrote for her—tear it into little bits and burn it.

TURAI. Right. And after that?

ADAM. Don't be so casual. You know I have nobody in the world but you—you two. If you hadn't been here, I'd have ended things long ago.

TURAI [*to MANSKY, who has once more started on the breakfast*]. That's right. Peck a bit.

MANSKY [*jumping up*]. No. It's no good. Absolutely can't swallow. I'm a very sick man.

ADAM. You see? I'm to blame for that.

TURAI. Now listen to me, my boy. Sit down. [ADAM *sits*.] What has happened, has happened. It's over, done with, a thing of the past. And I'm going to say something to you now which no young person will ever believe. You're twenty-five and you're gifted. The world's at your feet. And that world, let me remind you, contains a great many million women.

ADAM. What good are they to me? I only wanted this one. [*Rises*.] Can't we get away now—at once. I won't see her!

TURAI. Oh, yes, you will. No scandals, if you please. You arrived here late at night; everybody knows she is your fiancée, you can't run away this morning. Now, I'm not going to urge—in fact, I—er—positively forbid you to become reconciled to her—but you must do the sensible thing. In the course of the morning we will go to her and pay our respects, and stay on here another day or two, and we will not breathe a word of what happened last night.

You will behave toward her quite nicely and naturally. I know it will hurt. It's a bitter pill to swallow. But to-day you are a man.

ADAM. Yes. You're right.

TURAI. Up with the head and out with the chin and damn everybody! That's the stuff. The day after tomorrow, when we leave, you shall write her a letter, and let yourself go as much as you like. And, no matter how it may hurt, you have finished with that woman forever.

ADAM [*with an effort*]. Very well. And if it should hurt *too* much, don't be afraid that I'll go back to her. I'll always have pluck enough to put a bullet through my head.

MANSKY. There! See where you have got us to with your psychology.

TURAI [*to ADAM*]. You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

ADAM [*smilingly*]. It's all right. It was silly of me to talk nonsense like that. I won't let you down. You shall be satisfied with me.

MANSKY [*to ADAM*]. Good. Then you won't—er—tear anything up?

ADAM. No.

TURAI. You'll behave toward Ilona as if nothing had happened?

ADAM. Yes. Honor bright.

[*He holds out his hand.*]

TURAI [*rises*]. I am satisfied.

MANSKY [*sitting down to breakfast, a completely changed man*]. It's an enormous relief to me to see you getting hold of yourself again so capitally. [*Eats rapidly.*] Bless my soul, yes, an enormous relief. I really feel a little better.

TURAI. I'm proud of you. [*To MANSKY.*] Haven't you finished breakfast yet?

MANSKY [*delighted*]. I can swallow.

TURAI. So I notice.

MANSKY [*to ADAM*]. Come and join me, my boy. You'll find your appetite steals back, little by little. [*To TURAI, who is standing beside him.*] He's suffering. He can't get over it.

TURAI. We must try to make him.

MANSKY. Come on, my boy—just a mouthful. Try a little of this excellent ham.

ADAM. I don't want any ham.

MANSKY. Well, a slice of chicken, then—and some nice hot tea with a drop of brandy.

ADAM. Oh, all right.

[*Sits down.*]

MANSKY [*to TURAI, who is sitting deep in thought*]. Well, what's on your mind?

ADAM. After trying to cheer me up, are you going to be depressed yourself?

MANSKY. Do you know what I think's the matter with him? He's got another—

TURAI. You win. Another problem.

MANSKY. Theatre?

TURAI. As always.

MANSKY. Oh, my God!

TURAI. Last night, when we came into this room, I was saying how hard it was to begin a play. I'm now thinking how hard it is to end a second act.

MANSKY. Oh, come and end your breakfast.

TURAI. No, I mean it. It's worrying me. Take this situation of ours, for instance—just as we did yesterday— We have had a curious experience. We arrived perfectly happy and immediately got a terrible shock—a ghastly disillusionment. We've managed to survive it, and we've got

ourselves in hand again. But, suppose these things had happened not in real life but on the stage—suppose this were not a real room but a painted set—suppose we three were characters in a play who had just passed through the experiences we have passed through—

MANSKY. Well?

TURAI. Well, how would you end the act?

MANSKY [*impatiently*]. My dear fellow! It's ended already.

TURAI. In a way, yes. But don't forget that, at the last moment, before the curtain actually falls, you need something more—a new note of suspense—a punch—both, if you can manage it. In fact, just what is implied in that word "Curtain." Curtain—Curtain. The act must end and yet it must not quite end. The audience's interest must be snapped up—given a jolt. So, my distinguished collaborator, how about it? You've often told me how good you are—try your hand at ending the second act of this dismal adventure of ours.

MANSKY. My dear chap, simplicity itself. Come here. Sit down. [*TURAI sits at table.*] Now then. I'm all for the quiet curtain. One of those charming delicate things the French do so well. You know—sophisticated—lightly sentimental—the smile behind the tear. The three friends sit down to breakfast. Audiences always like to see actors eating. The storm has passed. The skies are still a little dark, but there is sunshine in the heart and all that sort of thing. Let this sink in for a bit—everything very cozy and pleasant. Business of eating—we each have a glass of wine. [*They all take*

up their glasses.] For a moment—silence—their thoughts are busy with what has passed. [*Pause.*] Capital. And then—[*He raises his glass.*]—you want a couple of smart lines, spoken with something of a flourish. [*Thinks.*] Oh, well— [*Then as if he had thought of what he wanted to say—to ADAM.*] My young friend, to-day you have become a man—

TURAI [*pointing to where he was sitting at the time*]. I said that.

MANSKY. For — always remember—

TURAI. Yes, that shows 'em it's coming.

MANSKY [*not heeding him*]. Always remember that in affairs of the heart it is not the first victory that makes us men, but the first defeat. [*Lifts his glass.*] To Woman's Treachery, which has made our child a man! [*Raises his hand toward the curtain.*] Curtain. [*Curtain starts to come down. They put their glasses down on the table, simultaneously, untasted.*] MANSKY *smiles complacently.*] How's that?

TURAI. Rotten! [*Curtain slowly goes up again. Gets up.*] Tame. Feeble. Nothing in the nature of a high spot. I'm not saying it isn't pretty and graceful. Charming even—but it lacks suspense. [*Pause. To ADAM.*] How would you do it?

ADAM. I? Feeling as I do now?

TURAI. Give us your idea.

ADAM [*with tremendous intensity*]. Very well, I'll give you my idea. We start from where Mansky gave that toast.

MANSKY. To Woman's—?

ADAM [*rises*]. Treachery. That's it. I'd say—"No. I won't drink any toast."

[*Throws glass against the wall, smashing it to bits.*]

MANSKY [*approvingly*]. Effective.

ADAM [*rapidly losing control of himself and becoming hysterical*]. That woman was not just an incident in my life. She was my first great passion. I promised to act as if nothing had happened. I meant to keep that promise. But when I remember that I gave her my life and that she whispers words of love to another man—and—and kisses another man, that's such unbearable, burning torture, that the only right solution— [*Grabs small game carving knife from table.*]

TURAI [*leaping forward*]. Hey! Stop that!

ADAM [*struggling with him*]. No! No!

MANSKY [*rushing forward*]. My God! You weren't really—

ADAM [*struggling*]. Let me go. I want to die.

[*TURAI has got knife away from him. He looks at it intently.*]

ADAM *stands, pale and defiant.*]

TURAI. What the devil do you think you're doing?

ADAM [*bitterly*]. Just—finishing the act. [*He sits down. MANSKY follows him and sits down, too. Smiles wanly.*] Curtain!

[*Curtain starts to come down.*]

TURAI [*putting the knife away*]. Very bad. [*Curtain goes up slowly again.*] Quite impossible. Death's all right for the end of a play, but absolutely no good for a second act. Besides, the scene was too crude. I don't say the gallery might not like it, but think of what the critics would say. They despise melodrama. Sus-

pense is what you want—suspense and then a quick curtain.

MANSKY. And now, I suppose, you could show us how it really ought to be done?

TURAI [*goes to telephone*]. Hello. Will you give me Miss Ilona Szabo's room, please.

[*Bell sounds in ILONA's room.*]

MANSKY [*starting*]. What on earth—?

ILONA'S VOICE. Hello.

TURAI. Hello. Ilona?

ILONA'S VOICE. Yes. Who is that speaking?

TURAI. Don't you recognize my voice? This is Sandor Turai.

ILONA'S VOICE. Oh, how wonderful! Are you here, then? Where are you speaking from?

TURAI. Yes, I'm right here in the castle. Next door to you. Number four.

ILONA'S VOICE. What a perfectly delightful surprise.

TURAI. We came by car last night. All three of us.

ILONA'S VOICE. You don't mean Albert, too?

TURAI. Yes—and Mansky, if you think that worth mentioning. We're all three here in this room, and we've brought you the finished script of the operetta.

ILONA'S VOICE. Marvelous! That's something like a surprise!

TURAI. We were hesitating about waking you so early, but I particularly wanted to see you about something. Can you come in here for a minute?

[*Replaces receiver and goes to door. ADAM and MANSKY stand where they are. Enter ILONA with assumed joy and excitement.*]

ILONA. Well, this is wonderful of you all. [*She kisses TURAI lightly and crosses quickly to ADAM who kisses her hands.*] What a surprise. Albert, darling! This is a surprise. [*She hangs onto ADAM's arm.*] Sandor! To think that it's—

TURAI. Three whole months—

ILONA. —three whole months since I've seen you. How brown you're looking. And younger than ever. Let me look at you. Wonderful! [*She crosses to MANSKY and kisses him on each cheek.*] And Mansky—how are you, Mansky dear? I think this is too sweet of you all. You don't know how I've been longing to see you. When did you get here?

[*She returns to ADAM.*]

TURAI [*very gravely*]. Just a minute, Ilona. [*He looks through door into her room.*] Why, Mr. Almady! Of all people! Won't you come in?

[*Enter ALMADY.*]

ALMADY [*nervously*]. Good morning.

TURAI. Fancy finding you here after all these years.

ALMADY [*pompously*]. Passing through. Just passing through. I only wanted to say how-d'you-do to the Count, but they wouldn't let me go. The—er—the shooting-party you know, and the concert. They insisted on my staying.

ILONA. I was so surprised to see him.

TURAI. Pardon me for disturbing you and possibly casting a slight gloom on what must have been a joyful reunion, but I have something rather important to say.

[*ILONA drops ADAM's arm.*]

ILONA [*crosses to TURAI*]. What

do you mean? Nothing—nothing unpleasant, I hope?

TURAI. Yes—extremely unpleasant. [ILONA sits down, terrified. To ALMADY.] Please. [He motions them to sit down.] Well, then. We arrived here last night— [Long pause.] And just now we were sitting having breakfast—we three— [To MANSKY.] Weren't we?

ADAM [puzzled]. Yes.

MANSKY. Well?

TURAI. Keep quite calm, please. We were sitting here, having breakfast—all three of us. [He lowers his voice and speaks very earnestly.] I must entreat you all to hear what I am about to say quite calmly—Don't lose your heads—

ILONA. For God's sake—

ALMADY [uneasily]. Well? What is it?

TURAI [holds up his hand]. Please! [Dead silence.] What I am about to say—and I shall not detain you long now—must almost inevitably have a shattering effect on the lives—both the private and the professional lives—of all us five people. I have asked myself—is it wise to speak? And I have answered myself

—wise or not, it is unavoidable, Ilona— [ILONA rises; gasping.] I have a question to ask you— [Breaks off. Dead silence. Then very simply to MANSKY.] How's that for suspense?

MANSKY. Yes. Yes. Well? What now?

TURAI. Nothing. That's all. [Smiles.] Curtain! [Curtain comes down quickly and rises immediately. He offers ILONA his arm, as the rest of the group breathe again and relax their tension.] We've just been having an argument about the proper way to end a second act. [Leads ILONA slowly to door, left to hall, the others following.] I couldn't resist the temptation to show these colleagues of mine how, by the most simple methods, you can make an act end on a note of suspense. You see—

[He goes out, talking, followed first by ALMADY, then by ADAM and MANSKY.]

MANSKY [going out; to ADAM]. Crazy. Absolutely crazy. Thinks of nothing in the world but the theatre—

THE CURTAIN FALLS AGAIN

BURLINGAME

PUBLIC

ACT THREE

LIB.

[SCENE: As the curtain rises it reveals the room lighted up by the electric sconces and candelabra. A large and elaborately painted screen in silver and green has been placed in front of the window. It is painted to suggest an orchard. The screen shuts out the view of the Mediterranean, but to the left and right of it we glimpse the lighted esplanade, and many more twinkling lights than in the first act, for it is early evening. There are

two garden chairs in front of the screen in the raised portion of the room; otherwise the scene is unchanged. MR. MELL, the Count's secretary, and the master of ceremonies, enters at left from the hall. He is a fussy, pale young man with high-pitched voice. He wears glasses and is in evening clothes. He is carrying a wicker table, and carrying it with difficulty and discomfort. He places it between the two wicker chairs in

front of the screen and stands caressing his hands where the table has cut into them.

MELL [*calls*]. Dwornitschek. [*To himself.*] Where is that man? [*Calls.*] Dwornitschek.

DWORNITSCHKEK'S VOICE. Coming, sir, coming.

[*DWORNITSCHKEK enters from the hall, followed by a lackey. They are both in formal, full-dress livery of white with knee breeches, and powdered wigs. DWORNITSCHKEK carries a book, two letters, a scarf and a woman's hat. The lackey carries a tall brown hunting hat, whip, gauntlets and a large, luscious peach.*]

MELL. Oh, there you are at last. Why are you so late?

DWORNITSCHKEK. I fell downstairs, sir.

MELL. Well, that oughtn't to have taken you long.

[*He fiddles with the screen.*]

DWORNITSCHKEK. You should have let *me* carry those things, Mr. Mell.

MELL. I couldn't wait. You are so slow.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Slow but sure, sir. [*He puts things on table.*] When I was a lad, my mother used to say . . .

MELL. I don't want to hear about your mother.

DWORNITSCHKEK. No, sir. Very few people do.

MELL. Have you got all the properties?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Props, sir, is the more professional expression.

MELL. I was using the more technical term. . . . Well, properties or props, have you got them?

◆ THE PLAY'S THE THING

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir. Book . . .

MELL. . . . Peach . . .

DWORNITSCHKEK. . . . Scarf . . .

MELL. . . . Whip . . .

DWORNITSCHKEK. . . . Two letters and a pair of gloves.

MELL. Good. [*Mops his forehead.*] Oh, dear, what a headache I'm getting.

DWORNITSCHKEK. What you want is an aspirin.

MELL. Have you an aspirin?

DWORNITSCHKEK. No, sir.

MELL. You're a great help.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you, sir. If I might be allowed to say so, you let yourself get too nervous on these festive nights, sir. You *worry*.

MELL. How can I help worrying, with all the responsibility there is on my shoulders?

DWORNITSCHKEK. What I always say is—Never worry too much to-day. Things may be worse to-morrow, and then you can worry twice as hard.

MELL. It does make me so nervous when people want to alter the program at the last moment. First Miss Szabo says she's going to sing, then she says she's going to act. . . . [*He breaks off as ALMADY enters. Goes to ALMADY.*] Good evening, sir, good evening. You are first in the field.

ALMADY [*grouchily*]. Good evening. The others will be here directly. They're dressing.

MELL. A wonderful shooting party to-day, sir. Capital sport, capital. There is nothing like a good brisk day out in the open with the guns. What a color it has given you.

ALMADY. I wasn't there.

MELL. Eh? Oh! Not there?

ALMADY. No. I've been in my room all day, writing.

MELL. Pardon my curiosity, but may one ask what you were writing?

ALMADY. No, one may not.

DWORNITSCHKEK [*explaining*]. I think the gentleman does not wish to say what he was writing, sir.

MELL. Oh, are you still there?

DWORNITSCHKEK. Yes, sir. Still here.

MELL. Then go away.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Very good, sir. Really I shouldn't worry, Mr. Mell. Look on the bright side, sir.

MELL. All very well for you. You have no responsibilities, and the guests give you big tips.

DWORNITSCHKEK. That *is* the bright side, sir.

[*He goes out at left to hall followed by the lackey.*]

MELL. A secretary's life is a dog's life, Mr. Almady. Work, work, work, from morning till night, and never a word of thanks. [ALMADY *takes no notice.*] You are very silent, Mr. Almady.

ALMADY. I sometimes find it soothing to be silent. Try it yourself one of these days . . . I take it the concert begins directly after dinner?

MELL. Immediately following the serving of coffee.

ALMADY. And when does this—this play of ours come on?

MELL. It is the last item on the program. The place of honor.

ALMADY. Bah!

[*Walks away up stage.*]

MELL. Sir?

[*Follows him.*]

ALMADY [*absorbed in his part which he is studying*]. Nothing.

MELL. Miss Szabo tells me that

no scenery is required but two elegant chairs and one elegant table.

ALMADY. Is that an elegant table?

MELL. Well, really—no. But what can one expect in a garden? Oh—if only the scene had been an interior, there's some perfectly lovely furniture in the Count's room—genuine Louis the Fifteenth. A very elegant period, Louis the Fifteenth.

ALMADY. I don't care a damn. They're all the same to me. Louis the Fifteenth or Louis the Fourteenth or Louis the Seventeenth.

MELL. But there isn't a Louis the *Seventeenth*, and I've often wondered why. Why, I've wondered, should there be a Louis the *Sixteenth* and a Louis the *Eighteenth*, but not a Louis the *Seventeenth*?

ALMADY [*exasperated*]. Oh, God. Ask a furniture dealer.

MELL. I did. I'm *always* asking furniture dealers. But they only know as far as Louis the *Sixteenth*. That's where the Louis stop for furniture dealers. Whenever I say Louis the *Seventeenth* they say you mean the *Sixteenth*, and I say no, I don't mean Louis the *Sixteenth*, I mean Louis the *Seventeenth* and . . . [*Breaks off and mops his brow.*] I'm afraid I'm talking a great deal, sir.

ALMADY. Oh, you've noticed that?

MELL. The fact is, Mr. Almady, I'm all a-twitter.

ALMADY. What have *you* got to be nervous about?

MELL. I'm always like this on these big nights. You see I'm responsible for everything and it's terribly wearing on the nerves. [*During this long speech of MELL's, ALMADY becomes bored and walks away, and MELL, suddenly aware that he is talking to the air, follows him.*]

I'm stage manager, property man and prompter. I turn the music, show the ladies to their seats, hand bouquets onto the stage—and I'm expected always to applaud at the right moment. I assure you I have often gone to bed after one of these entertainments with my hands so tender I could scarcely hold my toothbrush. [ALMADY *does not answer.*] You will pardon me for mentioning it, sir, but you don't seem quite your merry old self to-night.

ALMADY. I'm as cheerful as any man would be whose brain had been addled from studying an infernal part all day.

MELL. But I thought you said you had spent the day writing?

ALMADY. Yes, I—I always memorize a part by writing it out.

MELL. What energy! What enthusiasm! Have you a nice part?

ALMADY. No. Rotten.

MELL. Dear, dear, dear! You'll feel better when you hear the applause. We're great applauders here. We don't care *how* bad an actor is—

ALMADY [*offended, moves away*]. Thank you.

MELL [*follows*]. I beg your pardon. I—I don't mean it like that.

[*Goes to door of ILONA's room and knocks.*] Miss Szabo, please. Miss Szabo, please. Beginners, please.

[*Enter ILONA in evening dress.*

Enter ADAM, right, in dress clothes.]

ILONA. Well, we seem to be all here.

[ALMADY *bows.*]

MELL. Good evening, Miss Szabo, good evening, good evening.

ILONA. Well, we may as well begin.

ALMADY. Wouldn't it be as well

to wait for Mr. Turai? [*Bitterly.*] Seeing that he is being so kind as to give us his invaluable assistance.

ILONA. He'll be here directly. Where is the prompter?

MELL. Present. Present.

ILONA. Here's the script.

[*Hands it to him.*]

MELL [*goes to stage*]. I hope this extempore set meets with your approval? [*Pointing to screen.*] A little idea quite my own.

ILONA. Charming. [*To ADAM, sincerely, deeply concerned.*] Albert—you seem—you seem—very quiet—this evening.

[MELL *sits.*]

ADAM. Oh, no, not a bit. A little tired, that's all. We had rather a long motor drive and I didn't get much sleep last night— Please don't think— [*Breaks off as MELL shows signs of impatience.*] I'm afraid our friend the secretary is getting restive.

ILONA. What on earth is the matter?

MELL. I'm all a-twitter.

ILONA. Well, do simmer down. [*To ADAM, who has sat down.*] Surely you're not going to stay for this rehearsal?

ADAM. If you don't mind.

ILONA. Oh, I don't mind. But you'll be thoroughly bored. A silly little French piece. You'll be seeing it after dinner. I should have thought once would have been enough.

ADAM. Well, as a matter of fact, Mr. Turai asked me to stay and help out till he came. And I promised him I would.

ILONA. Just as you please. [*Very nervous.*] Can't we begin? Are the props here?

MELL. Nothing is ever missing

when I am the property man. There they all are—on the table.

[*Points to table. MELL picks up scarf and hat and helps ILONA.*]

ILONA [*takes book and letter*]. Those are yours. [*ALMADY pockets the peach and the remaining letter.*] Now then—let's start. The Countess—that's me—discovered alone. Seated in chair, reading book. [*Sits down. To ALMADY.*] You're not on yet.

[*ALMADY stalks off to the left.*]

MELL. Do we go on now?

ILONA. Don't ask so many questions. Yes, go on.

[*She reads book.*]

MELL [*reading from the script*]. Curtain rises on a glorious garden. Period Louis the Fifteenth.

ILONA. You don't have to read that.

MELL [*doubtfully*]. I always have.

ILONA. You only have to give the actors the spoken lines.

MELL. Now, I never knew that before—Now, that's very interesting.

[*He looks stupidly at script.*]

ALMADY [*coming down*]. What on earth's the matter now?

ILONA. I'm afraid Mr. Mell is not much of a prompter.

ADAM [*taking script from MELL*]. It's all right—let me hold the book.

ILONA. No.

ALMADY [*simultaneously*]. No, no.

ILONA. You mustn't.

ADAM. What do you mean?

ILONA. I won't have it—

ADAM. Why not?

MELL [*to ADAM, offended, sarcastically*]. No doubt Miss Szabo means that it is beneath the dignity of such an important person. Please give me the book.

ADAM. Do stop fussing. Can't you see you make them nervous.

MELL. Make *them* nervous? What about *my* nervousness?

ADAM. I tell you I'll hold the book. And you can do it for the performance. Does *that* satisfy you?

MELL [*deeply offended*]. Oh, quite. Oh, perfectly—

ILONA [*to ADAM*]. Now you've hurt the poor man's feelings. You've insulted him—

MELL. Madam, I'm a secretary. I spend all my time receiving insults.

ILONA. Oh?—Well, let's begin. [*To ALMADY.*] You're off. [*Again ALMADY stalks to left.*] Countess discovered seated in armchair, reading book.

[*Takes up book. ALMADY is wearing the brown hat, gauntlets and carrying the riding whip.*]

ADAM [*prompting*]. What a silly—

ILONA [*speaking her lines*]. What a silly story. [*Closes book.*] Just like all novels.

ADAM. What *can* I do—

ILONA [*yawning*]. What *can* I do to kill the time? The Count is always out riding. Paris seems very far away amidst these sleepy fields of Normandy.

ADAM. Hoof-beats heard off—

[*MELL imitates hoof-beats by beating his thighs with his hands.*]

ILONA. Hark! I hear him coming—Can this be my husband? Surely he went off on his horse to visit our old tenant, honest Jacques Benoit.

[*MELL makes the hoof-beats louder and louder.* ALMADY

comes into the scene dramatically, ominously, but his entrance is completely ruined by MELL continuing the hoofbeats. ALMADY stamps his feet impatiently and at last MELL stops.]

ALMADY. So, madame!

ILONA. Why, what is the matter? Why do you frown, my dear Count?

ALMADY. Why do I frown? That, madame, you will learn—and speedily, as sure as my name is Count—Count—

[He can't remember his name.]

ADAM *[prompting]*. Maurice du Veyrier—

ALMADY. As sure as my name is Count Maurice du Veyrier de la Grande Contumace Saint Emilion.

ILONA. You frighten me, Maurice.

ALMADY. It is your guilty conscience that frightens you, madame.

ADAM. Traitress. *[ILONA starts and looks at him nervously. ADAM rises]*. Traitress! No doubt you supposed me a credulous imbecile whom it was simple to hoodwink—

[Enter TURAI and MANSKY, both in evening dress, from the right. ILONA and ALMADY, confused by their guilt, for the moment believe that ADAM is accusing them.]

ALMADY *[very embarrassed]*. No doubt—you—I—

ADAM *[still prompting]*. You thought that any story would do for me? You imagined that I was fool enough to swallow anything—

TURAI *[coming down, horrified, thinking that ADAM is making a scene]*. What!!!!

ADAM. Shhhh!— *[Goes on prompting.]* No doubt you supposed me a credulous fool—

TURAI *[relieved; he grasps the situation]*. O-oh! *[Takes the script from him.]* Let me have that script.

ADAM. Why? *[To ILONA.]* Aren't I prompting well?

ILONA. No.

ALMADY *[simultaneously]*. No.

ADAM *[ruffled]*. Nothing like being frank.

MELL *[goes to ADAM and pats his shoulder]*. Don't take it to heart. Even I wasn't good enough for them.

ADAM. Perhaps you'll tell me where I went wrong?

TURAI. Don't ask so many questions. *[Seats himself in MELL's place.]* I'll take on this job.

MELL *[to ADAM]*. Everybody is so rude.

TURAI *[looking at script]*. All right. From where you stopped.

ALMADY *[glibly]*. Traitress, you have deceived me. I have long had my suspicions. I have now in my possession the proofs. No doubt you supposed me a credulous imbecile whom it was simple to hoodwink. You thought that any story would do for me. You imagined that I was fool enough to swallow anything. Let me tell you, madame, that you are mistaken. For a long time I have suspected that there was something behind all these rides of yours with our neighbor the Marquis Jean François Gilette de la Tour d'Argent. Day after day, for hours at a time, you have made a practice of riding with him on the road from Duvernois Sur Saône to Saint Sulpice de la Grande Parmentière—and slowly at that!

ILONA. It's a lie. Who told you?

ALMADY. Silence, woman! The proofs are in my pocket. *Mon Dieu,*

is there no gratitude in this world? When I married you, who were you? A nobody. Your father, Brigadier-General Pierre Jean Bourmond de la Seconde-Chaumière-Rambouillet, fell in battle at Grande-Lagrugère Sur Marne, and you eked out a scanty living as a seamstress at your mother's home in the village of Saint Genevieve, in the Department of Seine et Oise. So, madame! And then what happened? I came. I gave you name, rank, and wealth such as you had never dreamed of. You became Madame La Countess du Veyrier de la Grande Contumace Saint Emilion. I bestowed upon you not only my estates in Pardubien-Grand-Amanoir, but also my two castles in Challenges-Debicourt de la Romanée and at Rivalieux-Quandamouzières Sur Vantera-aux Alpes Maritimes.

[*He stops exhausted.*]

TURAI. Don't stop. What's wrong?

[*ALMADY takes off his hat and gloves, puts the whip down on the table, and, stepping out of character, comes down to TURAI.*]

ALMADY. It's these damned French names. They're perfectly frightful.

TURAI. I don't see what we can do about it.

ALMADY. You surely don't need them all?

TURAI. They're in the script.

ALMADY. But I'll go mad trying to memorize them. Titles with six hyphens in them and names of places with a dozen "aux" and "de la's" and "surs." And, damn it, they're all in my part. [*Choking with fury.*] It's deadly. At least, let's leave out that second castle.

TURAI [*coldly*]. My dear fellow,

have you no sense of dramatic construction? If he had given her only one castle, the audience would think her perfectly justified in deceiving him. If he had given her three, they would look on him as a purse-proud fool who didn't deserve a faithful wife. No, two is exactly the right number. You can't beat Sardou when it comes to technique. Go on, please.

[*ALMADY goes up hopelessly and replaces his hat and gloves and takes up the whip.*]

ALMADY. I made you a countess and a wealthy woman. And what return do I get? You betray me—yes, madame, betray me—with my best friend and nearest neighbor, the Marquis Jean François Gilette de la Tour d'Argent, lord of Perigord des Champignons and Saint Sulpice de la Grand Parmentière. [*He breaks off, and removes hat and gloves as before.*] My God, it's enough to give a fellow apoplexy.

TURAI [*surprised*]. I beg your pardon? That doesn't seem to be in the script.

ALMADY [*down to TURAI as before*]. I'm sorry. I can't help it. It's these names.

TURAI. Well, I'm always open to suggestions. What would you like to call the gentleman?

ALMADY. Foch or Briand—or something short like that.

TURAI [*sarcastically*]. Perhaps—Vichy! Get on, please.

[*ALMADY goes up stage more hopeless than before.*]

ILONA [*nervously*]. Oh, do let's get on. Count, you have said enough.

TURAI. So *he* seems to think.

ILONA. I will not endure these

shameful accusations. You are insulting the woman who bears your name.

ALMADY [*again taking off hat and gloves and putting down the whip*]. It's a damned shame.

TURAI. What is?

ALMADY. I always have to say the whole infernal thing from beginning to end, and she just says "your name."

TURAI [*coldly*]. We're wasting time.

ALMADY. Another word, madame, and I produce the proof.

ILONA [*laughing*]. The proof? One is amused. One smiles.

ALMADY [*takes stage and turns*]. A smile which I will make to die upon your lips. Behold! The proof!

[*He fuddles in his coat-tail pocket from which he belatedly takes the peach with a sinister flourish.*]

ILONA [*with insincere terror*]. Ah, gorgeous heaven! The peach!

[*Sits.*]

ALMADY [*lays peach on table*]. Yes, madame, the peach. The first peach that ripened on the lovingly cherished, early-blooming, richly bearing, East Indian dwarf peach trees in my orchard at Simarineux de la Pomme d'Api, making a triumphant entry into the world days ahead of any other peach in the whole of France. [*He turns and glares at TURAI resentfully. TURAI pays no attention, so he resumes his part.*] You know what a passionate fruit grower I am. You know that I have tended this peach from its first budding—cared for it—watched over it—wrapped it about with my love—kept a diary about it—and awaited

its ripening like the coming of a Messiah. And what happens? This afternoon I go out riding. I am proceeding at a gentle jog-trot—[*MELL imitates hoof-beats as before. ALMADY is incensed by his stupidity. MELL subsides abashed, and ALMADY resumes*]. I am proceeding at a gentle jog-trot from Duvernois Sur Saône to Saint Sulpice de la Grand Parmen-tière—

[*He breaks off with an anguished look at TURAI.*]

TURAI [*coldly*]. Along the high-road—

ALMADY. Along the highroad. And whom should I see there, tripping along, but Juliette—your maid. I speak to her. She betrays embarrassment at seeing me. She stammers and ties her apron-strings in a knot. I ask her where she is going. Terrified, she bursts into tears and whispers, "My lady sent me to the Marquis Jean François Gilette de la Tour d'Argent"—curse him!

TURAI. Right. This time that *was* in the script.

ALMADY. Why, I ask the girl, did your mistress send you to the Marquis? And then suddenly, happening to look closer, I see that she is trying desperately to hide a little parcel from me. I take it from her, I open it, and what do I see? [*Points to peach.*] That peach! The King of Peaches, the apple of my eye—my pride and joy, my firstborn, the supreme peach from the orchards of Simarineux de la Pomme d'Api—the last word in stoneless fruit which I have been guarding since birth like a baby sister— And, as if this were not enough, wrapped round that glorious specimen of its kind, I discover a letter. [*He fuddles in his inside*

coat-pocket, draws out a letter, sees it is the wrong one, replaces it hastily, and draws forth the proper one.] This letter—*[He reads.]*—"My beloved. This is the first peach that has ripened in France this year. I send it to you. Eat it reverently." *[He holds the letter under her nose.]* There!

ILONA. Are you trying to make me smell it?

ALMADY. I am. For even if you were shameless enough to deny your writing you cannot deny your perfume. Or are you proposing to deny it?

ILONA. No.

ALMADY. Ha! Then you admit it?

ILONA. Yes.

ALMADY. You sent him this peach?

ILONA. Yes.

ALMADY *[again takes off his hat and gloves. To TURAI]*. It's simply rank injustice. I've got to say yard-long speeches at the top of my voice, and all her part consists of is little exclamations like "oh!" "no!" and "yes!"

TURAI. Yes—I noticed that myself. These short crisp speeches are characteristic of Sardou's women! It can't be helped. Go on, please.

ALMADY *[goes back, puts on hat and gloves, more miserable than ever]*. So! You accept from me everything—love, name, rank, riches, estates—two castles—and then you go about the place sending my most cherished fruit to your lover!

ILONA *[rises, tragically]*. No.

ALMADY. You have the effrontery to pretend that the Marquis is *not* your lover?

ILONA. Yes.

ALMADY. You mean he is?

ILONA. No.

ALMADY. You mean he is *not*?

ILONA *[triumphantly]*. Yes.

ALMADY *[with a theatrical laugh]*.

A likely story. Madame, I am a fruit-grower, the leading amateur horticulturist in France and President of the Paris Peach Club. I know—I say, I *know*—that one does not give fruit like this save where one has first given—the heart. Madame, I despise you.

ILONA. You consider conduct like mine despicable?

ALMADY. I do.

ILONA. Good! Then I have one little question to ask you. In the early spring of this year there ripened in your orchard the first crop of white-heart cherries. To whom did you send those cherries?

ALMADY *[turns away embarrassed]*. To my mother. The Dowager Countess du Veyrier de la Grande Contumace Saint Emilion.

ILONA. Indeed? To your mother? Then permit me to show you something. You are not the only one who has discovered an interesting letter. *[Takes letter from table.]* Smell that! Do you recognize the perfume?

[Holds it under his nose.]

MELL *[to ADAM]*. What a situation! Sardou at his best. There's no one like him.

ILONA. The perfume is that of Mademoiselle Emilienne, première danseuse at the Folies Bergères, whom you honor with your friendship and protection.

ALMADY. How—how did you get this?

ILONA. Never mind. Always remember letters are like sped arrows.

You never can tell where they are going to drop.

MELL [*applauds vigorously*]. To ADAM]. An epigram.

ILONA. Read it, please.

ALMADY [*reading*]. "My dearest. This morning that doddering old idiot of a count of mine—"

ILONA. You notice how your divinity writes of you? Go on!

ALMADY [*reading*]. —"that doddering old idiot of a count of mine sent me a basket of cherries. Did I tell you he was a famous fruit-grower? He says these are the first cherries that have ripened in France this year and he sends them to me as a token of his love. Drop in this evening, darling, and we'll eat the old fool's cherries together. Your loving Emilienne. P. S. Ring twice as usual!"

[*He sobs.*]

ILONA. You see, what you do to me, I do to you. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a peach for a cherry.

ALMADY [*brokenly*]. Yes. It's true.

ILONA. And now, leave my garden. This very afternoon I pack my boxes and go back to my mother. And if you will question my maid you will find that I told her to hang about till you came by—to blush and stammer—and finally to give you the letter and the peach. [*She breaks into stage laughter.*] Ha, ha, ha! Oh, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

ALMADY. Well, I must face it. I've lost.

ILONA. You've lost me.

ALMADY [*kneeling*]. Yvonne! Don't say that. See! I beg your forgiveness on my knees . . . overlook this one false step.

ILONA. The idea! A count, and an elderly count—groveling like that.

[*ALMADY gets up and turns away.*]

All the same, you have touched me. So I will forgive you. But you are not to get off without punishment. Firstly, I forbid you to eat this peach.

ALMADY. My God! Not that!

ILONA [*firmly*]. Yes.

ALMADY. So be it.

ILONA. Secondly, you will permit me to go to Paris alone—

ALMADY [*despairingly*]. Yvonne!

ILONA. Not a word. Either you trust me or you do not! If you *do*, I will return. If *not*, *not*.

ALMADY. Oh, heavens! And how long do you expect to stay in Paris?

ILONA. A week.

[*Short pause.*]

ALMADY [*suddenly bursting out*]. No! I can't live without you. I worship you. I adore you. I love you as the church steeple loves the cloud that settles on its summit, only to be wafted away by the first passing breeze. I can't live without you. Not a week, not a day. Not an hour.

ILONA. Just words.

[*At the word "church steeple"*

MANSKY and ADAM have exchanged a glance of utter astonishment.]

MANSKY [*rises*]. But . . . but . . . but . . . Just one moment. . . . What was that you said?

ILONA. I beg your pardon?

TURAL. Now, listen, please. We can't have these interruptions. Don't pull them up the moment they've got nicely into the swing of it.

MELL. I can't wait to see how it all ends. [*To ADAM.*] Will she leave him? Or will the memory of their past love prove too strong?

MANSKY [*goes to ADAM— Aside to him*]. This is devilish queer.

TURAI. Quiet, quiet, please. [*To ALMADY.*] All right. Go on. Better go back to "Not a week! Not a day! Not an hour!"

ALMADY. *Not a week! Not a day! Not an hour!*

ILONA. Just words.

ALMADY. It's the truth. I'm crazy about you. And you—you have used me up and squeezed me like a lemon, and now you want to throw me away.

[*At the word "lemon" MANSKY and ADAM again exchange glances. MANSKY gets up, deeply agitated.*]

MANSKY. Sandor . . .

TURAI. What is it?

MANSKY [*to ILONA and ALMADY*]. You'll excuse me? I have something very urgent to say to Mr. Turai. [*He crosses to TURAI and drags him over to the corner below the fireplace.*] Do you hear what they're saying?

TURAI [*feigning non-comprehension*]. How do you mean, do I hear what they're saying?

MANSKY. I mean . . . didn't those last lines sound familiar to you?

TURAI. That's right. Now you mention it. I did notice something, only I thought it was my fancy.

MANSKY [*to ADAM*]. Come here. [*MELL tries to become a part of the whispered conference, but ADAM waves him away, and he withdraws up stage, disconsolate. To TURAI.*] I give you my word, Sandor—those lines were syllable for syllable the ones we heard last night through the wall.

TURAI [*looking at script*]. By Jove, you're right. . . . This is uncanny.

MANSKY. Go on with the re-

hearsal, or they will be suspecting something. I want to hear some more.

[*MANSKY takes hold of ADAM's arm. ADAM is very excited. Both listen intently.*]

TURAI. Well, let's get on. "Now you want to throw me away."

ILONA. I don't want to throw you away, silly. Oh, come on, then. Come here and let me kiss that beautiful classic brow.

[*ALMADY goes to her.*]

MANSKY [*shouting out*]. Great heavens!

ILONA [*jumping*]. What's the matter?

MANSKY [*whispering*]. Listen, you two. They're saying word for word what we heard them say last night. Do you grasp now what they were doing last night? *Rehearsing!* Simply going through their lines.

TURAI [*to MANSKY*]. I must admit . . . this has come upon me as a complete surprise. . . . Really, I'm quite shaken.

ADAM. Imitate *me*. If I can be perfectly calm, you can.

MANSKY [*pointing at TURAI*]. And he never recognized it!

ILONA. Mr. Turai! What's going on?

ALMADY. Yes. What's all the discussion about?

TURAI [*to ALMADY*]. Well, it's like this. Mansky says—and I'm bound to say I agree with him—that for the actual performance to-night you will have to dig up a classic brow from somewhere.

ALMADY. Dig up a classic brow?

TURAI. You see, it's rather awkward. The script says . . . "Kiss that beautiful classic brow."

ALMADY. Well?

TURAI. Well, you'll have to get one somewhere.

ALMADY [*bitterly*]. You think my own would not be convincing?

MANSKY. My God, no!

ALMADY. It has been so described.

TURAI. In this play, yes. But, if you'll pardon my saying so, you wouldn't suggest that any woman of taste could say such a thing in *real* life?

ALMADY [*bitterly*]. Very good. No doubt the property man will be able to supply me with a face.

[*MELL is appalled at the prospect of having to get a "face" but he dutifully makes a notation of it in his little book.*]

TURAI. Oh—my dear fellow.

[*All go back to places.*]

ADAM [*impatiently*]. We're wasting time. Let's get on.

TURAI. Sh! Sh! We've only a few minutes more.

ADAM. No more interruptions.

MELL. Thank God!

ILONA. Where were we? Oh, yes. Come here and let me kiss that beautiful classic brow.

[*Kisses him on forehead.*]

ALMADY. That's not a kiss. That's a tip.

MANSKY. Surely that line is a trifle vulgar.

TURAI. It's vulgar because it's spoken by a vulgar man.

MANSKY. The speaker is a count.

TURAI. But a dull-witted bounder, for all that. He's the sort of man who *would* say things like that. Don't you start trying to teach Sardou how to write dialogue.

ALMADY [*furious*]. For God's sake, are we going to rehearse?

TURAI. Yes—go on, please.

ALMADY. That's not a kiss. That's a tip.

ILONA. Don't shout like that.

ALMADY. I will shout. I'm a squeezed lemon. That's what I am—a lemon. The whole world shall know I'm a lemon.

[*Falls sobbing at her feet. MANSKY whispers something to ADAM. ADAM smiles happily and whispers back. They shake hands.*]

TURAI. Please—please— What's the matter?

MANSKY. Nothing. I was merely saying to Adam that I think that word "*lemon*" is all wrong.

TURAI. I think it's excellent. Absolutely in character. The speaker is a big lemon-and-peach man from Saint Sulpice de la Grande Parmentière, and he naturally goes to the orchard for his similes. Try to realize that he's practically an imbecile with virtually no vocabulary. [*ALMADY looks up from ILONA's lap and registers indignation. Prompting.*] "Please, please"— [*To ILONA.*] From you, my dear. [*To ALMADY.*] You're crying.

[*ALMADY sobs.*]

ILONA. Please, please. Don't cry. I can't bear it. You know how fond I am of you.

[*She goes to table where peach is.*]

ALMADY. Those nights of love—those flaming, wonderful nights! Have you forgotten them so completely?

[*He stands up, and starts to touch the peach.*]

ILONA. Stop! Control yourself.

ALMADY [*gazing at peach*]. You ask me to control myself—when I look at *that*? At that perfect shape.

The rose flush of that skin. [*Starts to touch peach.*] Just to stroke it . . .

ILONA. Hands off.

ALMADY [*snatching up the peach, holds it in one hand and with the other strokes it voluptuously*]. My God! How round it is! How smooth, how velvety—and how fragrant!

[*Raises it to his mouth.*]

ILONA. You mustn't bite it.

[*She snatches his hand. MANSKY gives a shriek and goes into fits of laughter. ADAM stretches his arms out to MANSKY and roars. ADAM slaps MANSKY on the back, MANSKY laughing uninterruptedly. ALMADY turns away furiously. ILONA turns away, ashamed.*]

MANSKY [*putting his arm around ADAM's shoulder, still laughing*]. Heavens! What fools we've been!

ADAM. Haven't we?

MELL [*eagerly*]. Won't you tell me the joke?

ADAM. You wouldn't understand.

ILONA. What are you two so amused about?

TURAI [*curtly*]. Come, come. We're wasting time. Let's get on.

MANSKY. Yes, get on. I want to hear this. Round, smooth, velvety and fragrant.

ADAM. And you mustn't bite.

ILONA. You mustn't bite it.

ALMADY. I must—I am so hungry.

[*ADAM and MANSKY go on laughing. MELL laughs too, but with a puzzled look, as much as to say "I'm joining in, but I really don't understand."*]

ALMADY [*sits*]. Ah, well! I see I am nothing to you any more.

ILONA. Oh, for goodness sake! I swear that no man—

[*Breaks off, unable to go on.*]

TURAI [*prompting*]. No man who has ever come into my life . . .

ILONA. . . . has meant so much to me as you. From the top of your head to the soles of your feet you are a man.

TURAI. I think we might cut that last bit.

ALMADY. Why?

TURAI. Well, I mean to say . . . A little too explicit, don't you think? Rather too obvious a sexual implication. A wee bit coarse, perhaps, yes? We must consider the feelings of the audience. [*To MELL.*] Will there be any young girls there to-night?

MELL. Oh, yes, indeed.

TURAI. Then we must cut it. They may bring their parents. Instead suppose we say—"I love you, even though you are only a poor imitation of a man." [*ALMADY registers rage.*] Go on. [*To ALMADY.*] "My God! I suffer . . ."

ALMADY [*bitterly*]. My God! I suffer like a sick horse. [*To TURAI.*] Look here, *that* ought to come out.

TURAI. Why?

ALMADY. How could any one speak of himself so vulgarly?

TURAI. We went into all that just now. Just what a cattle-raiser *would* say.

ALMADY. But he's a fruit-raiser!

TURAI. Cattle, too. Cattle as a side line.

ILONA. Don't look so pathetic. . . . Well, come here. Kiss me. You donkey.

ALMADY [*furiously to TURAI*]. It's too much . . . Horse and donkey.

ADAM [*aside to MANSKY*]. This is where I went out. How funny it seems now.

TURAI [*looks at script*]. We're

getting near the end now. They kiss here.

[ALMADY *starts to kiss* ILONA.]

ILONA [*pushing him away*]. Oh, never mind the kiss. Kiss over.

ALMADY [*offended*]. Just as you please. I want you to remember that kiss forever.

ILONA. Your kiss is revolting to me.

ALMADY [*despairingly—to TURAI*]. Does that stay in?

TURAI. My dear fellow, we can't cut everything.

ALMADY. But a line like that's so damned personal. The audience will loathe me.

MANSKY. It beats me why on earth you ever chose a part like this.

[ALMADY *looks toward TURAI in mute appeal, but TURAI is adamant and metes out no mercy.*]

TURAI [*with subtile mockery*]. Yes. It's no business of mine, but I must say I can't understand that, either. It doesn't help to cut lines here and there. It's the whole part. The character's a bounder and a fool.

MANSKY. The author must have loathed this fellow. [*To TURAI*]. You notice that, Sandor, don't you?

TURAI [*ironically*]. Of course, I noticed it.

ILONA. Do let's get to the end. [*Rises.*] Mademoiselle Emilienne describes you as an old fool.

[ALMADY *glares.*]

TURAI [*prompting*]. "And so I am."

ALMADY. And so I am, Yvonne. [*Furious.*] So I am.

MANSKY. You certainly are.

ILONA [*sincerely*]. It's disgusting that a man of your age should persecute a woman, and by playing on her sense of gratitude seek to obtain a

love which she would never bestow as a free gift.

ADAM [*crossing down to TURAI and whispering*]. Uncle Sandor—will you give me your word of honor that Ilona shall never know how shamefully I suspected her?

TURAI. Don't be childish.

ADAM. If ever she found out—she'd never look at me again.

TURAI. I'll never tell her.

ILONA. Please don't interrupt any more.

ADAM [*bows elaborately and says with meaning*]. Forgive me.

[ILONA *accepts his apology with an affectionate gesture, and when his back is turned it is she who is mutely asking his forgiveness.*]

TURAI. Go on!

ILONA. Think of your wife. Think of your children.

ALMADY [*turns away*]. My children!

ILONA. What would your son say? Your son, a highly respected colonel in the Dragoons.

[*This is too much. The Actor in ALMADY is crushed. He comes down to TURAI brokenly and speaks supplicatingly.*]

ALMADY. Mr. Turai.

TURAI [*amiably*]. Yes?

ALMADY. It's just a suggestion, but couldn't we say lieutenant there?

TURAI. I'm afraid not. You see it was "general" in the text.

ALMADY [*wildly*]. My son a general?

ILONA [*to TURAI*]. How far back can I go?

TURAI. At the most a major.

ILONA [*quickly*]. Very well. Your son, a highly respected major in the Dragoons.

ALMADY. You are right, Yvonne. The shock would kill him.

[ALMADY *breaks off, evidently unwilling to speak his next line. But TURAI prompts him relentlessly.*]

TURAI. "A ridiculous old petticoat-chaser."

ALMADY [*speaking the lines almost sotto voce in a casual offhand manner*]. A ridiculous old petticoat-chaser, that's what I am. Bah!

TURAI. Oh, come, Mr. Almady. Not so tamely, please. More life. Once more.

ALMADY [*comes down to TURAI and says the line with petulance and irritation*]. A ridiculous old petticoat-chaser, that's what I am. Bah!

TURAI [*relentlessly*]. Still not quite strong enough. More gusto. More sincerity.

ALMADY [*shouts the line to relieve his fury*]. A RIDICULOUS OLD PETTICOAT-CHASER, THAT'S WHAT I AM. BAH!

TURAI [*coldly*]. Once more, please.

ALMADY [*shouting to the full limit of his vocal chords in wild desperation*]. A RIDICULOUS OLD PETTICOAT-CHASER, THAT'S WHAT I AM. BAH!

TURAI [*with approval*]. Fine—that's it. Now read it that way at the performance.

[ALMADY *returns up stage completely crushed and beaten.*]

ALMADY [*genuinely*]. I promise you I shall never again make myself obnoxious to this woman who loves another man and is sick and tired of me. Never, never again.

ILONA [*briskly*]. Never again?

ALMADY [*briskly*]. Never again.

ILONA. Then, Maurice, I will be

generous. I will not go to Paris, and you may eat the peach.

ALMADY [*hurls himself at the peach*]. My God! At last!

[*Gnaws the peach.*]

TURAI [*rising*]. Curtain.

MANSKY. The end?

TURAI. The end.

MANSKY. He really should have given his wife the peach. That would have made a much prettier finish.

TURAI. Oh, my dear fellow! Where's your sense of character? The man's selfish to the core. He'd never give his wife peaches.

MANSKY. A very unsympathetic part. Still, he played it well.

TURAI. It fitted him.

MELL [*dancing about in anguish, pointing to ALMADY, incoherent with agitation*]. Oh! Oh!

TURAI. What's the matter with you?

MELL. He's eating the peach! He's eating the peach! I never dreamed he was going to *eat* the peach. I shall have to dash out and get another.

[*He rushes off to the hall.*]

ILONA [*takes off scarf. To ADAM, who stands overcome with happiness*]. Well, how do you like me in this part?

ADAM. Oh, darling, you were wonderful, simply wonderful. And, if you want to know what I think—this little comedy is worth all Shakespeare put together.

[*He kisses her hands.*]

MANSKY. Oh, no, no, no. The thing dates terribly. When did Sardou write it?

TURAI. I don't know. What period Sardou is this, Mr. Almady?

ALMADY. I should imagine it was his last work.

MANSKY. Then he must have been a very old man at the time. It's terrible. He probably wrote it just before he died.

TURAI. Or just after. [*To ILONA.*] Can I have a minute? Just a few things I'd like to tell you about your part.

ILONA. Yes, yes, I shall be very grateful. [*To MANSKY and ADAM.*] Go along. We shan't be a moment.

[*They go up the stairs at right.*]

MANSKY. What beats me is why an actor who has always played heroes picked a part like that for himself. He must be terribly fond of acting.

[*MANSKY and ADAM go out at right.*]

TURAI [*to ALMADY, who is sitting dejectedly at left*]. You seem upset.

ALMADY [*miserably*]. Not at all. [*He glares at TURAI.*]

TURAI. So you've decided to take the midnight express directly after the performance?

ALMADY. Yes.

TURAI. I think you're wise. A good, fruity train, highly spoken of by connoisseurs. Well, just to show you the sort of fellows we Turais are, I'll let you off the major. Ilona, you can say lieutenant.

ALMADY. Even lieutenant seems a little . . .

TURAI. Good God! We can't make him a drummer boy.

ALMADY [*picks up part*]. Very well. So be it. I suppose I ought to be thankful for small mercies.

[*Goes toward door to hall.*]

TURAI. Where are you off to?

ALMADY. I'm going to have another go at those infernal French

names. But in spite of everything—thank you.

[*ALMADY bows and then goes out.*]

ILONA [*going to TURAI and embracing him*]. Sandor, you're an angel. Was it awfully difficult, writing that play?

TURAI. Oh, no. That damned peach stumped me for a while. Smooth, round, velvety and fragrant, and you mustn't bite. It wasn't easy to get round that. Believe me, there are very few things in this world that are round, smooth, velvety—and respectable.

ILONA [*turns head away*]. Oh—he was talking about my shoulder.

TURAI [*with delicate irony and gazing at her shoulder, then kissing it*]. Really? I thought it was your forehead.

ILONA. You're an old devil—that's what you are.

TURAI. Just what I expected. Now that it's all over, everybody else is a gentleman and I'm an old devil. But somehow I don't think I am. My little Ilona, I have saved a young man a bad heartache. It's a negative kindness, but is there a positive one that's better? Yes, on the whole, I think I'm fairly well satisfied with myself. And there's a little old woman looking at me from somewhere—probably from hell—and her eyes seems to be twinkling, as if she was satisfied, too. It's unfortunate, that you won't have me always on hand to . . .

[*Reënter MANSKY and ADAM.*]

MANSKY [*on the landing, to ADAM*]. Poor old Turai's feeling awfully sore about all this. He had a wonderful scheme for bringing you two together, based on what he calls

psychology. And now he's furious because that won't be needed.

[Enter DWORNITSCHKEK from hall.]

ADAM. Sh! Ilona will hear you. Let's drop the subject.

DWORNITSCHKEK [standing at center]. Dinner is served.

[ADAM meets ILONA at center. They embrace and kiss lovingly and go out to the hall arm in arm.]

MANSKY [with self-satisfaction to TURAI]. So, my friend, it comes down to this. There are many clever writers, but the most successful of

them all is still old man life himself.

TURAI. That's because he doesn't have to collaborate with you.

[He takes MANSKY's arm. As he passes DWORNITSCHKEK he stops and looks at him.]

DWORNITSCHKEK [smiling]. Dwornitschek, sir.

TURAI. Still Dwornitschek—Thank you.

DWORNITSCHKEK. Thank you, sir.

TURAI. No, no, my dear Dwornitschek, thank you.

[TURAI and MANSKY go out.]

THE CURTAIN FALLS

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
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T H E W I T C H

Translated by

SANFORD J. GREENBURGER

Not yet produced in America

CHARACTERS

ACTRESS

LADY

MAID

[SCENE: *Sitting room in the Actress' apartment. Two doors. One opens on the hall, the other leads to her bedroom.*]

MAID [*crosses the stage. Knocks at bedroom door.*]

ACTRESS' VOICE [*off stage*]. What is it?

MAID. There is a lady here. She wishes to speak with madame immediately.

LADY [*enters, listening intently*].

ACTRESS' VOICE. What does she want?

MAID. She says that it is a very important and urgent family matter and that it will be very interesting to madame, too.

ACTRESS [*still off stage. In a loud voice, shouting*]. I am not at home! [*MAID turns, sees the lady. Is frightened.*] Did you hear me? Tell her that I am not at home!

MAID [*turns to door again*]. Madame, I am sorry, but the lady is

in this room and she heard you say that you are not at home.

ACTRESS' VOICE. Lizzie, you are fired.

MAID [*exits in tears. Before going, turns to LADY*]. You are to blame, lady!

[*ACTRESS enters, dressed in a negligée.*]

LADY. I am really sorry that I caused . . .

ACTRESS. Don't be sorry. This isn't her first offense. Can I do anything for you?

LADY. Yes.

ACTRESS. What?

LADY. Give my husband back to me!

[*Kisses the ACTRESS' hand. Weeps.*]

ACTRESS. Give . . . give your husband back to you? Are you crazy?

LADY. Yes. [*ACTRESS is pensive. As if she were trying to remember.*] You are wondering who my husband

is? My husband is that little blond man with the pince-nez who is the lawyer for your theatre. His name is Alfred Nagy Strong.

ACTRESS. I know him. Of course. Counselor Nagy.

LADY. I know that you know him. Please give him back to me!

[*Long pause.*]

ACTRESS. My dear lady, the reason I hesitate is not because I am embarrassed, but because I am quite at a loss for an answer to your preposterous request. [*She is seated next a little table.*] Please sit down. How can I return your husband to you when I never even took him away?

LADY. But you said that you knew him.

ACTRESS. That does not mean that I have taken him away from you. [*Pushes a box of cigarettes in front of LADY.*] Smoke? Fragrant Egyptians.

LADY. Thank you. I do not smoke. I started to say that you and my husband . . .

ACTRESS. Yes. Yes. I know him. He represented the theatre when I signed my contract. And I have seen him cross the stage at rehearsals several times, just *en passant* . . . He is a pleasant, insignificant, little blond man. . . . You say he wears a pince-nez?

LADY. A pince-nez.

ACTRESS. I never saw him wear it.

LADY. Because he takes it off when you see him. Because he wants you to like him. Because he loves you. He wears a pince-nez when he is with me because he does not care about me. He does not love me. Give him back to me, sweet

Magdalene, give him back to me, dear Bobo. . . .

ACTRESS. If you only didn't look at me so sweetly . . . What is your name?

LADY. Ilona.

ACTRESS. If you only didn't look at me so sweetly, Ilona, I should like to be rude to you, dear. How do you get that way, dearie, saying that I have seduced your husband?

LADY. He sends you flowers.

ACTRESS. That is a lie, honey.

LADY. What was that, dear?

ACTRESS. It is not so, sweetness. He has never given me a single flower.

LADY. Not only did he say so, my dear, but I even inquired at the florist, sweetness, and I found out, sweetness, that he really sends them but he tells the florist that they are not to be delivered on the stage but should be taken discreetly to your dressing-room, sweetness.

ACTRESS. It is a lie, honey.

LADY. Do you mean to say that I am lying, angel?

ACTRESS. No. He is lying.

LADY. What about this letter?

[*Takes letter from her reticule, and hands it to ACTRESS.*]

ACTRESS. What of it?

LADY. Read it.

ACTRESS. I'll not read it. You read it.

LADY [*looks at the letter*]. He writes that. . . .

ACTRESS. What? The letter is not even from me, but from him?

LADY. Yes, it is from him. It is addressed to you.

ACTRESS. Addressed to me? Let me see it.

LADY [*shows her the envelope*]. I'll read it to you: "Dearest Bobo, I

cannot come to the theatre to-night, so, instead, I am sending you in this letter a thousand and one kisses for your beautiful, heart-shaped lips."

ACTRESS. Unheard of!

LADY. Is that your entire opinion of the matter?

ACTRESS. Yes. Unheard of! And how did this letter get to you?

LADY. In the morning when he left, he forgot this letter on his desk. It seems that he meant to take it with him, give it to some messenger to have it put in your dressing-room for you to find when you arrived in the evening. But the fool forgot it and I opened it.

[*She weeps.*]

ACTRESS. Don't cry. It makes me nervous.

LADY. Why not? I will cry. You cry, too. Let's both cry. Let's make each other nervous! This is very sad, believe me. A fêted, beautiful woman, a famous actress, robs a poor little lawyer's wife, née Ilona Irmuczay Grey, of her husband, and Ilona should not even cry? It is easy enough for you, because one night you dress as a Royal Princess, another night you undress as a Greek Goddess, you straighten your eyebrows with black paint, you draw a heart-shaped mouth, you put blue around your eyelids, you smell good, you are colorful, you are exotic, you are voluptuous, you are a witch, you sing and you dance—and so, of course, the simple lawyer falls for you. But what am I to do in my washable blouse, with my own mouth and my own eyebrows, my own stupidity and my own simplicity? I cannot sing of love to him at the piano! . . . But you drive him mad with all this. Besides, you speak your part and the

stupid men give you credit for all the witty and clever things the writers put into your rôle. Why, it is possible that you are even more stupid than I am, but you are compelled on the stage to say clever and witty things because the author has written them into your part. No authors help me, so how can I drive a lawyer mad with my stupid words?

[*She weeps and tears the lace spread on the little table.*]

ACTRESS. Don't bawl, Ilona, don't bawl. Your bawling is awful and it is no way to get at the truth. And, please, don't tear that lace spread. I bought it in Venice last summer. If you knew how much it cost you would leave it alone.

LADY. Forgive me.

[*Takes a cigarette out of the box.*]

ACTRESS. Do you want a light?

LADY [*alarmed*]. Oh, no!

ACTRESS. What, then, do you want to do with that cigarette?

LADY. I want to tear it. I am so nervous. I always tear something when I am nervous.

ACTRESS [*takes it away from her and puts it back into the box. Gives her a piece of newspaper*]. Here you are. I'd rather you tore this—it said bad things about me. Tear it as hard as you can. And now let us continue. Listen to what I say. It is a very interesting case.

LADY. What case?

ACTRESS. Yours.

LADY. Mine? Why?

ACTRESS. Because your husband never gave me a single flower, never a line of writing, never anything but legal conversation. Didn't things between you two sort of cool off lately?

LADY. Yes, a little bit.

ACTRESS. Did you marry for love?

LADY. I didn't have a penny.

ACTRESS. Then everything is all right. I know everything. It isn't the first time in my life, or in the lives of actresses, and it won't be the last. Know you, primitive one, that your husband is playing this comedy with you in order to make you jealous and so to win back your interest!

LADY. What did you say? This isn't the first case?

ACTRESS. The hundredth! The thousandth! Ask any pretty actress. It is the thing that brightens up all marriages around the theatre. Managers, secretaries, legal advisers, playwrights, treasurers, auditors, scenic designers, musical directors and even base drummers—all keep their wives' interest alive by mixing us in their affairs. Do you begin to understand, you ninny? These non-actors, the individuals whose lives are still bound to the theatre, we actresses glue to the hearts of their wives. These around-the-theatre-wives are all afraid of us; they compete with us; they dress well because of us; they permanent-wave their hair because of us; they have their eyebrows plucked because of us; and because of us they wear much more exciting underwear than we ourselves . . .

LADY [*indignant*]. Oh, oh, oh!

ACTRESS. Don't be indignant, because you are likely to get me mad, and then I'll stage an underwear competition with you that will make you dizzy. I bet that yours are flimsier than mine.

LADY [*clutches at her dress*]. How can you say such a thing?

ACTRESS. I know you all. In matters of underwear you are much more transparent than we are!

LADY. My God! . . . do you think so?

ACTRESS. Of course I think so. You, and together with you the rest of the poor simple bourgeois women, feel that your husband lives in a half-sensuous atmosphere filled with seductive charm, where he sees many different and more exciting women than his wife. Kisses are easier, speech isn't so strict either—everything is overemphasized, artificially keyed-up femininity. An actress is a hundred women. That is what confuses you. Look at those actors' wives who are not on the stage. They speak more freely, act more freely, dress more freely than we do. They are afraid of us, they do not want to lag behind. Your husband is a shrewd lawyer who has exploited the situation because he feels that you do not love him.

LADY. That I do not love him?

ACTRESS. Or, at least, that you have become a bit lukewarm toward him.

LADY. Do you think I became lukewarm? It looks to me as if he had cooled.

ACTRESS. Most likely he cooled because you became lukewarm. Therefore he wanted to warm you up—for which purpose he invented me. He wrote a letter and forgot it so that you could find it. He ordered flowers to make you think that he is in love with me—and at six o'clock in the evening he cancelled his order at the florist's. He is an indecent fellow! Hasn't he a lock of my hair?

LADY. Of course he has!

[*Shows it to* ACTRESS.]

ACTRESS. See, Ilona? See, you simpleton! This is one of my locks, which are being stolen from my

dressing-room by the dozen. Even the theatrical barber makes his wife jealous with one of them and you were taken in, too. Put that hair away. I don't even want to see it.

LADY. Do you want it back?

[*Offers it to her.*]

ACTRESS. I do not. Keep it instead of an autograph. The counselor has certainly fooled you well, honey.

LADY [*happily*]. Do you think so, dear?

ACTRESS. I do not think so, dear, but I know so, honey. Failing to discover for yourself that, as the wife of a theatrical lawyer, you must compete with us, your husband forced you to it. I loathe that civilian element which hangs around the theatres, but I am impressed by the conjugal fidelity of the men, and it flatters my vanity to know that they can use me to frighten such upright, pretty little women as you. Hasn't your husband any love letters from me?

LADY. I looked, but I could not find any.

ACTRESS. You looked in vain because I did not write any.

LADY. Then why do you ask?

ACTRESS. If he had come to me and said: "Bobo, I want to win back the love of my wife, be good enough to write me a good, hot love letter which I can drop out of my pocket at home,"—I would have written to him very gladly. It would have just teemed with love so that you would have cried in your pillow for two weeks if you had found it in the hall. I wrote about ten of them to a famous author once, after a similar request. He was unlucky, however, for his wife was a discreet lady and as soon

as she found them, she returned all of them unread.

LADY. Oh, how clever you are! And, at the base of it, how good you are!

ACTRESS. At the base of me I am just what I am. Neither more beautiful, nor better, than other pretty women. But I live in the theatre and, therefore, to you Ilonas, I am a bit terrible. Don't tear the lace cover because I'll slap your hand. I told you that I brought it from Venice. It is an expensive rag.

LADY. Forgive me. [*Short pause.*] Well, aren't you angry with me?

ACTRESS. No.

LADY. Am I stupid?

ACTRESS. Yes.

LADY. Was I stupid?

ACTRESS. No. You were a woman and you acted like a woman. Therefore you were not stupid. But now you are a little bit pitiful with those unhappy, cried-out eyes of yours. One should not love even Lohengrin himself as seriously as you love your blond with the pince-nez. But that is your business.

LADY. It is our business!

ACTRESS. Since the counselor has achieved his purpose don't be fooled by him any more, no matter what you find in his pocket.

LADY. I surely will not. I'll not be fooled again.

ACTRESS. Not even if you find a dozen letters from me to him?

LADY. Not even then.

ACTRESS. Even if he carries my handkerchiefs in his pocket?

LADY. Nor then.

ACTRESS. Not even if you catch him kissing my photograph?

LADY. I would laugh at him!

ACTRESS. Even if you see him

kissing me in person at the theatre?

LADY [*terrified*]. What?

ACTRESS. Yes, yes. Don't be scared, you lay monkey. That doesn't mean a thing in our lives!

LADY. Do you think so?

ACTRESS. I do think so. On the other hand, I am somewhat angry at him because, so long as he has compromised me, used me, he might at least have let me know about it.

LADY. Why?

ACTRESS. My God! To expose me to such a conversation! And my lace cover has been ruined!

LADY. Was I annoying?

ACTRESS. You certainly were annoying, sweetness. Have no illusions about it. You were annoying, you were annoying in my private apartment, which makes it all the more serious. I am angry with your husband and so, for revenge, I will now teach you not to let him fool you any more. Let him send me flowers, continue to write letters, to wait for me in the evening at the theatre, to come to rehearsal, to see me mornings. Don't even mention it to him, but, instead, as many times as you discover him doing these things, laugh up your sleeve, realize that all this is

addressed to you, all of it is done on account of you! Be happy because somebody suffers for you!

LADY. Thank you, Bobo. I'll send you my picture to-morrow.

ACTRESS. And you'll get one from me, too.

LADY. Will you autograph it?

ACTRESS. Of course! I will write on it: "To my lover's wife, from her affectionate friend, Bobo."

[*Lady stares at her, amazed.*]

ACTRESS. Don't stare! Laugh! When you see that the time has come, stick it under his nose!

LADY. How witty you are! How sweet you are! God bless you. Thank you, thank you.

[*Weeps.*]

ACTRESS. Don't start to cry again.

LADY. But I am so happy.

[*Weeping, she kisses her and exits. The hall door closes behind her. Pause.*]

ACTRESS [*opens the door to her bedroom. Remains on the scene while she speaks to some one beyond the door*]. You can come out now! Don't be afraid! Yes, yes, your wife has gone.

CURTAIN

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

BURLINGAME
PUBLIC
LIB.

O L Y M P I A

Adapted by
SIDNEY HOWARD

First produced in America by
Gilbert Miller
October 16, 1928

CHARACTERS

COUNTESS LINA
COUNT ALBERT, *her husband*
PRINCESS EUGENIE
PRINCE PLATA-ETTINGEN, *her husband*
PRINCESS OLYMPIA, *their daughter*
KOVACS
KREHL, *Colonel of the Imperial Gendarmerie*

ACT ONE

[SCENE: *A lounge of the Palace Hotel has been reserved for guests of high rank. The room is situated on the ground floor between the grand ballroom and the reading room. It gives on the terrace of the hotel.*

The rear wall is divided by two columns. At right and left down-stage are curtained doors. Curtains are drawn across the windows which give on the terrace.

A ball in honor of the Emperor's birthday is in progress in the ballroom. Dance music is faintly audible. It is a few minutes past midnight. Down stage right a sofa and a chair (chair 1) left—further down stage another chair (chair 2) and a low smoking table.

AT RISE: *The curtain rises upon an empty stage. After a moment COUNTESS LINA, a fine figure of a woman in her forties, enters left. She leaves the door open and comes quickly down by the sofa. She glances back uneasily into the ballroom, fanning herself to quiet her nerves. COUNT ALBERT follows her in, closing the door after him. He is smoking a cigar. LINA seats herself on sofa and motions ALBERT to chair 1.]*

LINA [*all nerves*]. Sit there please.

ALBERT [*does so*]. Here? Thank you. And do you mind my saying how intensely I dislike your melodramatic behavior? Now what is it?

LINA. I have something to say to you.

ALBERT. Well, I'm as comfortable as can be expected. Speak on.

LINA. Do you find my conversation so trying? Doesn't it occur to you that I may have something both urgent and important to tell you?

ALBERT. I find that difficult to believe, my dearest Lina. However, go on. Go on!

LINA [*with pride*]. Quite aside from being a member of our family, you are the Emperor's Master of the Horse.

ALBERT. Quite so.

LINA. You are devoted, heart and soul, to the dignity of the Imperial family.

ALBERT. No one more than I. Go on.

LINA [*pride and nerves together*]. To-day is His Majesty's birthday. Even this frivolous watering place gives itself up to celebrating the Austrian Imperial glory. I have never seen a more healthily monarchical state of mind. The band has just finished the National Anthem. It made me weep. I wept this morning when I heard the guns.

ALBERT. That's twice you've wept. Go on.

LINA. I rise above your flippancy, Albert. I am accustomed to flippancy and I rise above it and proceed as usual. Because I have to inform you that I view with alarm, with the very gravest alarm, the behavior of the eldest daughter of your brother's brother-in-law's cousin.

ALBERT [*rising*]. If you'd make a diagram of that genealogy—

LINA. Sit still. It is precisely that genealogy which gives me my right to interfere. Sit down. [*He obeys.*]

The Princess Olympia is forgetting herself.

ALBERT [*protesting*]. Now, Lina!

LINA. I put it strongly with intention. You should know how His Majesty would view her behavior.

ALBERT [*disturbed*]. What behavior? What do you mean by forgetting herself? [*Forcefully.*] Explain yourself!

LINA. The Princess Olympia, first lady-in-waiting to the future Empress, is engaged in what I can only describe as philandering with a common Captain of Hussars. And that, if you please, in a common health resort. And so openly engaged that I wonder the earth doesn't open and swallow her up! [*ALBERT's only answer is a cloud of cigar smoke.*] You may well puff cigar smoke in my face! [*ALBERT indulges himself in a deprecating gesture.*] I'm not one to make such a charge without evidence. She is philandering. And with a Captain. Of the Imperial God knows what number regiment of hussars. His name is Kovacs. Not even *Von* Kovacs. That's what I meant when I said: "A *common* Captain." Two weeks her mother and she have been here. She's known the man two weeks. Her mother is the most particular woman in Austria. Even that doesn't restrain her. She is the daughter of a Prince Plate-Ettingen, General of the Imperial Cavalry. First Aide-de-Camp to the Emperor, and *still* she dares to . . . What would her father say? Her father, who has fought like a lion to set her on her present pedestal! Well, Albert?

ALBERT. You'd have enjoyed her pedestal yourself.

LINA. Why should I deny that? But if I were enjoying it, I hope I should know how to conduct myself.

ALBERT [*quite calmly*]. Lina, you've lost all your sense of proportion. You can't count on me in anything like this. I don't like your attitude. I tell you that quite frankly. I won't put up with it. Olympia's a snow queen. Her reputation stands above criticism. That's what has put her where she is. And you presume to accuse her of . . . what was it? Philandering? That marble goddess! Wherever did you get such an idea?

LINA. Goddess or not, Olympia's a woman. I ought to know, Albert, because she's a relative of mine! She was twenty when she married Prince Orsolini. He left her a widow at twenty-one. That's eleven years she's gone without a man in her life.

ALBERT. Olympia's a saint. And she lives like one.

LINA. Then let her behave like one. I don't deny it must be hard on her. A woman as handsome as she, as interesting to men as . . .

ALBERT. Specifically what do you accuse her of?

LINA. This Captain! This diamond-in-the-rough Hungarian Captain who plays bridge with her mother every night. . . .

ALBERT. It's damned good bridge!

LINA. And dances with Olympia and rides with her.

ALBERT. How superbly! A trifle reckless, perhaps, still . . .

LINA. I find his recklessness unsympathetic. A soldier ought to save his recklessness for wars.

ALBERT. Don't ask the man to wait that long! With our diplomacy, we shan't see war for a hundred

years! Certainly I don't want to wait that long to see him ride!

LINA [*snappy*]. You, too! Is every one here in love with him?

ALBERT. Why aren't you?

LINA. What's he to me? One of the Emperor's million soldiers. A Hungarian peasant.

ALBERT. Ah! So that's what you have against him!

LINA. I've told you what I've got against him. And if I'm sitting here with you this minute in this . . . this . . . [*A glance around.*] this semi-public room, it is because what happened this afternoon really did pass the bounds of decency. [*Now she can throw herself whole-heartedly into her story.*] This afternoon, at the Steeplechase, in which quite naturally you did not enter . . .

ALBERT [*indignantly interrupting*]. "Quite naturally?" What do you mean to insinuate by that "quite naturally?" I didn't ride this afternoon, my dear, because I didn't feel like riding. Are you insinuating that I was afraid to enter a steeplechase?

LINA. I didn't quite say that.

ALBERT. You didn't quite . . . Be careful, Lina, how you speak to me!

LINA. Now, Albert! Really! What do such things matter?

ALBERT. They matter. To a man.

LINA. Well, if you won't listen. [*ALBERT nods to her to proceed.*] This afternoon the Captain won the prize.

ALBERT. And he deserved it.

LINA. That doesn't interest me. Cavalrymen ought to know how to ride. But on his shoulder this one wore the Ettingen colors. Olympia's colors, Albert. A knot of ribbons. Red and blue. Well, is that impu-

dence or is it not? And, at the finish, —I don't suppose you saw what happened at the finish. After he'd got his prize. The way he charged Olympia's box! My dear, it *was* a charge! And as to what it meant to her! Well, I was sitting next to her. I couldn't help seeing the blushes.

ALBERT. Whose?

LINA. Olympia's. I should have seen his, too, only he was so hot they didn't show. Well, if *that* doesn't tell which way the wind blows! I ask you, my dear Albert, would he have dared do such a thing without encouragement from her? I wish I could understand Olympia and her mother. It's what comes of delusions of grandeur, I expect. They think that anything's permitted to them. All I say is: wait till the Emperor hears of it. Or of half of it. Or of a tenth part even.

[*A brief pause, then.*]

ALBERT. Lina, dear Lina, don't count on me to tell the Emperor. Because I shan't.

LINA. Afraid of her father, are you? Well, I daresay you're right. The Adjutant-General of the Imperial Cavalry *is* a power.

ALBERT. Listen to me, Lina. Let me advise you. Get over your old envy. It's gone on long enough. Olympia's the first lady-in-waiting and you're not. Admit you're licked. And don't be coming to me with any more intrigues. I'm the Ettingens' friend. You're wasting your time on me. I don't carry tales. I never have in my life yet, not so much as one little word. It's all fantastic anyway. [*A brief pause, then.*] You say I'm afraid to ride a horse and then expect me to believe . . .

LINA. You call this an intrigue?

ALBERT. What do you call it?

LINA. Legitimate criticism! [*Rises and goes up between sofa and chair 1.*] In the interest of the dignity of the Imperial family which I shall hold dear, Albert, to the day of my death. [*Crosses behind chair 2.*] The Crown Princess will one day be our Empress. That will make Olympia the most powerful woman in Austria. Alas! [*Turns savagely on ALBERT.*] Well, if she can't behave now, what *are* we to expect when she . . . [*The PRINCESS EUGENIE enters between columns A and B.*] Such a marvelous, brilliant, fascinating woman Olympia has grown to be! [*To the PRINCESS.*] We were just speaking of Olympia's prospects, darling, and I was saying to Albert that she'll presently be the most powerful woman in Austria.

[*ALBERT rises and goes to stand behind the sofa.*]

PRINCESS. You were saying no such thing, Lina, my love. You were indulging yourself in one of your orgies of malice and you changed your tune when I came in. I know you!

LINA. How people treat me!

ALBERT [*to himself*]. Afraid to get on a horse, am I? Too old, perhaps!

PRINCESS. I hope people will continue to treat you as you deserve, Lina. I know you, my dear, and I keep my eye on you and don't think that you'll ever catch me napping.

LINA. But, Jenny!

PRINCESS. I don't intend to let you knife *me* in the back. What have you got there?

LINA [*showing*]. My fan.

PRINCESS. I only wanted to make sure it wasn't a dagger.

LINA. Your claws scratch, don't they?

PRINCESS. I'd like them to flay you alive.

LINA. They're hardly sharp enough for that.

PRINCESS. Your skin must be very thick.

LINA [*going to her*]. How touchy all you Ettingens are! Too bad. It makes you so many enemies. I suppose it comes from your sudden rise.

PRINCESS. Thank you. That's very nice of you. We *are* touchy. There are worse things to be.

[*A brief pause.*]

ALBERT. Shall we declare an armistice, Jenny?

PRINCESS. Yes. Do let's. This ball has simply killed me.

LINA [*standing beside her*]. One can see that.

PRINCESS. Again, thank you, Lina. All this really is tiring, though. This mixing with our subjects. Our subjects are not, I confess, a weakness of mine. I'm glad the Emperor's birthday comes only once a year.

LINA [*piously*]. Long may he live!
[*Sits chair 2.*]

PRINCESS. What kowtowing nincompoops subjects are! And as for representing the royal family on these public occasions! Well, it simply kills me! It kills me, that's all, and I ought not to be asked to do it. What a relief to get in here away from it all! How sweet of the management to give us this little room all to ourselves! [*A sigh.*] Like a sanctuary, isn't it?

ALBERT. I've been watching your daughter. She's never looked so lovely. This fortnight here has done her good.

LINA. Sports. Charming walks.

Mountain climbing. Riding. No end of riding. Almost too much riding.

PRINCESS. All good things come to an end. This time to-morrow we shall be on our way to Venice.

LINA. Venice promises even better things, I'm told.

ALBERT. What's wrong with this?

PRINCESS. Nothing. I've loved it. All but His Majesty's subjects, that is. They've been a trial. Well, we shall have peace, incognito, in Venice. With no obligations to be nice to His Majesty's loyal bankers and devoted what-nots. And I shan't feel that newspaper men are bathing in the same water with me. They may be there, but they won't be from our newspapers. That's the trouble with all resorts, of course. There seems to be a horrible kind of democracy about health. Why don't we have these waters piped to some quiet spot far away from the people? Well, why don't we?

ALBERT. Come now, Jenny! These people have been sweet to-day.

PRINCESS. Oh, they have! And I'm delighted the Emperor's so popular. It's been a marvelous farewell for us, I know. Only don't blame me for not enjoying it. [*ALBERT rises and goes slowly behind the sofa. She rises.*] Well, my husband gets here by seven o'clock in the morning. Albert, dear, do go and find Olympia for me. She must be worn out, too.

LINA. She looked radiant in her box this afternoon.

PRINCESS [*as ALBERT moves left*]. What would you say to an hour of bridge before bed?

ALBERT. Why not?

PRINCESS. It may be late, but I've

been trying for a rubber since nine.

ALBERT. How many are we?

PRINCESS [*sitting sofa*]. Two.

LINA. I'll gladly make a third.

PRINCESS. I'm sure you would, but I shouldn't dream of playing with you.

LINA. Huh!

PRINCESS. Since nine o'clock I've slaved to get this game up and there's always been a missing fourth, but if we were on a desert isle instead of here, where I can choose my company—if we were on a desert island in the midst of the Pacific Ocean, my dear Lina, four shipwrecked passengers and you the fourth, even then I wouldn't play with you.

LINA. I suppose you'll want the Captain.

PRINCESS. I shall certainly want the Captain. The Captain is a great artist at the bridge table. The Captain plays bridge like an archangel. Find Captain Kovacs for me, Albert. The three of us can choose a fourth.

LINA. You seem fond of the Captain, Jenny.

PRINCESS. Fond of him, Lina? Don't be so diffident! I'm mad about him!

LINA. He loses gracefully.

PRINCESS. That is not my idea of a drawback. The Captain, my dear, is a lamb. I admit I am not politically in sympathy with Hungarians. I ask you, though, what other race could produce such a specimen? Hard, yet not unbending. Like steel, in that. Modestly deferential to his superiors. Speaks without the faintest Hungarian accent. A Londoner's English. Parisian French.

LINA. I daresay he's studied up on languages!

PRINCESS. One does not study up

on languages, Lina! Languages are a talent. And how he rides! Fetch me my Captain, Albert! Go fetch me my Captain quickly.

ALBERT [*moving toward door left*]. Where shall I look for him?

PRINCESS. Anywhere near Olympia! [ALBERT *goes shaking his head dubiously*.] What is it this time, Lina? What are you up to, now? You were certainly gossiping about us when I came in.

LINA [*rises. Goes quickly to chair 1. Sits and plunges into what she has to say*]. Jenny, I shan't stop for preliminaries. Your daughter is running things into the ground. I'll say it though you kill me for it! She is certainly running things into the ground.

PRINCESS. Just what are you running my daughter into, Lina? You don't need a megaphone.

LINA. You're right there, Jenny. And I'm surprised that I have to call your attention to anything so apparent. This afternoon when this precious Captain of yours performed the way he did in front of your box, wearing your colors on his shoulder, it seemed to me that a rumble of indignation ran through the entire audience.

PRINCESS. You're sure you didn't do the rumbling, Lina?

LINA. No, Jenny, I did not. I contained myself. I was too busy watching the newspaper men scribble things in their notebooks. Now, I hear he's off to Venice. Well, my dear, do you make nothing of all this?

PRINCESS. Not much. I can't see how it's any of your business. [*Suddenly nervous*.] What was it you said about newspaper men?

LINA. I said I saw them scribbling. In their notebooks. With little stubs of pencils.

PRINCESS. How do you know newspaper men when you see them?

LINA. Any man who scribbles in a notebook with a little stub of pencil is almost certainly a newspaper man. Think of the Emperor, Jenny. Think of the Emperor.

PRINCESS [*taken aback*]. I shall certainly speak to the management about this. Thank you, Lina. Thank you for telling me. This sort of thing must stop. Reporters talked about us once before. About me. Something about a legacy it was. I thought of taking poison.

LINA. There! You see!

[*She rises and goes center.*]

PRINCESS. For two whole weeks the Emperor wouldn't receive me. For two whole months my husband wouldn't speak to me. Oh, it's not good for me to think of that . . . [*Her hand to her heart.*] Now . . . just at the memory . . . my heart . . .

LINA. You see how careful one must be.

PRINCESS [*pause, then rises and goes to LINA*]. Lina, this must be nonsense. Olympia's got her father's dignity. She's always known, she always will know, where to stop.

LINA. Did you know, at her age?

PRINCESS. I knew where to stop you, Lina. You loved my husband, but I married him.

LINA. That's more than unkindness, Jenny. That's brutality.

PRINCESS. I'm glad you feel it, dear.

LINA. I rise above it.

[*OLYMPIA enters quickly left, still slightly elated from danc-*

ing. She crosses to column B and stands there, head held high. The door remains open.

ALBERT follows her in.]

ALBERT [*comes to chair 2*]. I've half done my duty. Here's your Greek goddess.

PRINCESS. Where's my Hungarian god?

ALBERT. He's deserted her.

LINA. What? Not with Olympia!

OLYMPIA. We sent that . . . that . . . oh, you know . . . French Ambassador to look him up. He's probably in the bar.

PRINCESS. Good! [*To ALBERT.*] Have we got a table?

ALBERT [*LINA bearing down upon him*]. I thought we could be quiet in the reading room. [*To LINA, trying to speak to him.*] Please, leave me be. Afraid to ride, you said. That was enough!

[*Crosses to chair 2 and sits, leaving LINA standing behind the sofa.*]

PRINCESS. I find this moment of silence very restful. Don't you, Olympia?

OLYMPIA. I can breathe again. The crowd's going, too.

LINA. I thought the ball was lovely.

OLYMPIA. So it was.

[*Pause.*]

LINA. And what a tribute to the Emperor! Don't you feel that?

OLYMPIA. Yes, it was.

[*Pause.*]

LINA. You must be tired.

OLYMPIA. Quite.

[*Pause.*]

LINA. It seems to me you're being short with me! How you all loathe me!

[LINA sits on sofa beside PRINCESS.]

OLYMPIA. Does it? Perhaps I've talked enough to-night.

PRINCESS. With all these people? I should think you have.

OLYMPIA. I didn't mind them. I scarcely noticed them.

PRINCESS. I think we ought to have the waters piped away. If only I didn't have to reduce so often! [*A very brief pause.*] Where can that Captain be? Is he coming or isn't he?

ALBERT. Somewhere. Being spoiled. By beautiful women. He's the hero of the evening, Jenny, dear. I wish he showed a little more respect for death. [OLYMPIA rises and moves uneasily toward ALBERT.] Doesn't it frighten you to have men do such things for you?

OLYMPIA. No. He's a rider. He knows how to ride.

[Goes left of chair. Pause. Knock.]

PRINCESS. Come!

[KOVACS enters.]

KOVACS. Princess, His Excellency the French Ambassador informs me that you command my presence here.

PRINCESS [*rises, goes to him*]. So they've found you at last?

KOVACS. Have I kept Your Highness waiting?

PRINCESS [*affectionate*]. I thought you took your time. Don't be a prima donna, will you?

KOVACS. *Forgive me!*

PRINCESS. Why shouldn't you, after the way I've spoiled you?

ALBERT. Who doesn't spoil him!

LINA. Who, indeed? Who, indeed?

PRINCESS. Can you guess what I want you for?

KOVACS. Can it be bridge, Your Highness?

PRINCESS. Certainly, it's bridge! Albert's found a delicious table in the reading room. I'll let you go in an hour. Shall we begin? Come on, my wizard of the game. To-night is our last evening. Let's not waste precious time.

LINA. What passion you put into bridge!

PRINCESS. What else have I to put passion into? The French Ambassador might make a fourth, I think. [*To ALBERT, who has followed her and stands beside her.*] Do you mind, Albert? The French Ambassador, to the reading room?

KOVACS [*low; close to OLYMPIA*]. I must talk to you.

ALBERT. Very well, Jenny. I'll find the Ambassador.

[*Goes right.*]

PRINCESS. Will you come watch, Olympia?

OLYMPIA [*who has given no sign at KOVACS' request*]. I'd like a moment, mother, before you begin.

PRINCESS [*comes down between door and sofa*]. Very well, my dear. Lina can take my hand.

LINA [*getting up*]. I'm to play after all?

PRINCESS. So long as I'm not playing, I don't mind. Take my hand. Play it as foully as you can and lose enough to make me angry. That should be some satisfaction to you.

[*Turns to OLYMPIA. LINA hurries out left. KOVACS follows, looking back at OLYMPIA.*]

OLYMPIA. I hope I was sufficiently discouraging to Lina.

PRINCESS. No one could possibly do that.

OLYMPIA. When Albert came to

fetch me, he warned me she's up to mischief. Albert's our man, you know. A true friend, too. Lina is getting to be a bore. She gave orders to-night that all the newspaper men were to be presented to her.

PRINCESS. I'm very interested to hear that! I see I shall have to act. And quickly. So will you, my dear. I detest the sort of thing I've got to say to you. I've never had to say it before. You must be careful. With this Captain. And clever. I've never known you to be indiscreet, but you must remember the envy that surrounds us day and night. Waiting for us to make a slip. Lina is legion, my dear. Vienna is just one great seething Lina. Need I say more?

OLYMPIA. No, mother. Thank you.

PRINCESS. I'm told he's following you to Venice.

OLYMPIA. Who told you?

PRINCESS. Lina.

OLYMPIA. Who told her, I wonder?

PRINCESS. He might have bought his ticket through the hotel porter. She's not above asking questions. She's not above spreading slander, either. The Captain must not come to Venice. He must not come any place where we are. This must stop. It should have stopped before.

OLYMPIA. There's been nothing to stop.

PRINCESS. That's enough. He's mad about you and can't hide it. You can't afford to have that sort of thing going on. Just think of those cold blue eyes of the Emperor's. Brr!

OLYMPIA. What do I do about it?

PRINCESS. You send him away, openly, honestly, mercilessly, and at

once. [OLYMPIA *does not answer.*] Will that be hard for you?

OLYMPIA [*pause, then*]. Yes.

PRINCESS. It can't be helped.

OLYMPIA. I see that.

PRINCESS. Or postponed.

OLYMPIA [*timidly*]. Mother, I've something to confess.

PRINCESS. My God!

OLYMPIA. Nothing like that! Nothing but a letter. One I wrote to papa. About the Captain.

PRINCESS. Without telling me?

OLYMPIA. This was something I wanted to do quite by myself. You know that His Majesty's been looking for a riding master for the Archduchess Leonora. You've heard what trouble he's had finding one.

PRINCESS [*terrified*]. You didn't recommend the Captain?

OLYMPIA. I asked papa to recommend him in my name. And, of course, anything I ask papa to do . . . [*A furtive glance toward her mother.*] Was that so awfully rash of me?

PRINCESS [*a thoughtful pause*]. No, my dear. Not at all. You've done the Emperor a real service. He couldn't possibly find his darling a better man. It was your duty to recommend the Captain. Why not? He's a thorough gentleman. The Emperor will have every reason to thank you. Only . . .

OLYMPIA. Only what?

PRINCESS. Only this clinches his *congé*. It must, my dear. You don't want people saying you recommended your . . . well, your lover? I know! But, such is gossip! . . . Does he know about this?

OLYMPIA. I thought I shouldn't tell him until I'd succeeded. I wanted to surprise him. I just had that idea

of doing something to help him. Something worth while. So I sat down and wrote papa. I've felt calmer, since. About his feeling for me, I mean; I've thought I'd given him something in return.

PRINCESS. This must settle it. Out he goes!

OLYMPIA. Of course!

PRINCESS. To-night! And, if you'll let me give you some advice. . . . Out of my own experience. . . . Be a true sportswoman about him. Don't wound him. Never torture men. Be humane. Strike to kill. Man is a noble animal. One word is enough to kill if it goes straight to the heart. Do you understand?

OLYMPIA. You might send him in here. Now.

[*The PRINCESS goes to the door left, pausing with her hand on the knob.*]

PRINCESS. Straight to the heart!

[*Goes. OLYMPIA stands quite still, waiting beside chair 2.*

KOVACS *enters right. Goes center. Stands there.*]

OLYMPIA [*turning to face him squarely*]. You said you wanted to speak to me. What about?

KOVACS [*a step toward her*]. You're going away to-morrow.

OLYMPIA [*her gaze falls*]. Yes.

KOVACS [*at her side*]. Would you mind much if I were to come to Venice?

OLYMPIA. Have you bought your ticket already?

KOVACS. Yes.

OLYMPIA. Where did you buy it?

KOVACS. Why, the porter bought it for me.

OLYMPIA. I see . . . You mustn't come to Venice.

KOVACS. I only thought . . . as an escort . . .

OLYMPIA. We're traveling with my father.

KOVACS. I have the honor of knowing His Highness, your father. We often walked together in Karlsbad last summer.

OLYMPIA. You will not walk together in Venice. You will even avoid Italy for the present.

KOVACS. I love you. Desperately.

OLYMPIA. That, my friend, is precisely why I . . .

KOVACS. I'm not a boy. My hair will be turning gray presently. My love for you is the catastrophe of my life. This is my last chance to tell you about it.

OLYMPIA [*facing him again*]. What can you expect me to do about it?

KOVACS. I don't understand?

OLYMPIA. I mean, what can you hope to gain by telling me?

KOVACS. Oh! I don't know. I hope to keep my sight of the sun, to keep my universe from crashing.

OLYMPIA. Shall we do without poetry and stick to facts?

KOVACS. I haven't known what a fact is since I've loved you.

OLYMPIA. You haven't told me what you hope to gain.

KOVACS. To gain! Before God and all the world, I swear . . .

OLYMPIA. Please! You can't expect me to marry you?

KOVACS. Is that hope so fantastic?

OLYMPIA. You're mad.

KOVACS. Forgive my madness.

OLYMPIA. I should leave you now if I hadn't something to say to you.

KOVACS. You've shown me how impossible my dream was.

OLYMPIA. I'm glad of that.

KOVACS. Let me go on loving you,

though. I'll be your slave, your . . .

OLYMPIA [*squarely at him*]. My lover, perhaps?

KOVACS. You put it baldly.

OLYMPIA. The less we mince matters, the sooner we can end them.

KOVACS. Why have you changed so suddenly?

OLYMPIA. Will you pay close attention, please? To every word I have to say? We can dismiss your proposal of marriage. As to your other . . . [*She regards him darkly.*] Who am I?

KOVACS. A woman.

OLYMPIA. Not to a mere Captain of Cavalry.

KOVACS. Even to him.

OLYMPIA. Attention, please. Let's be honest about this and keep your feelings out of it. Feelings are for those who have some hope of . . . of coming together.

KOVACS. I think I know what your feeling is for me!

OLYMPIA. I am now crushing my interest in you to death. Before it grows too strong for me. It might strike back if I let it grow too strong.

KOVACS. I knew you loved me.

OLYMPIA. Of course, I love you. I tell you that simply to show you how hopeless your case is. I've loved you from the first moment I saw you. I love you now. Nothing can come of my love, however. Nothing will ever come of it. I shall see to that.

KOVACS. But why?

OLYMPIA. I am no ordinary woman, my friend, you forget my rank. [*Pause.*] And I believe in my innate superiority. We are obliged to think of ourselves in that way, now that a filthy world is going mad around us.

KOVACS. When we were riding

together yesterday, I looked into your eyes. I'm looking now. Your eyes don't say such things.

OLYMPIA. I live as I must, my friend.

KOVACS. As you've been living for ten years!

OLYMPIA. Eleven.

KOVACS. No love, no happiness, for eleven years!

OLYMPIA. I've no desire to lie to you. I have known love and great happiness since my husband died.

KOVACS. Who?

OLYMPIA. Grotesque though your question is, I'll answer it. It was a king loved me, *Mr. Kovacs*.

KOVACS. Is that anything to turn pale about?

OLYMPIA. It is a memory, my friend. For which any woman would sell her soul. Put yourself in my place and look down for a little on yourself.

KOVACS. I see.

OLYMPIA. Now do you understand?

KOVACS. Yes. But it doesn't make me want you any less! I don't give up so easily. There is no power on earth to make me give you up!

OLYMPIA. Poor peasant!

KOVACS [*throws his head back. A pause, then*]. That's what I am. But I've felt your heart beating against mine. Just now, while we were dancing . . .

OLYMPIA. You are an officer and I danced with your uniform. Not with you.

KOVACS [*touching his insignia*]. Is it these silly stars that make your eyes shine now?

OLYMPIA. I'll admit that you attract me. But only as an ethnological specimen.

KOVACS That isn't true! You love me as a man!

OLYMPIA. You may say what you please. You're in the death-house, now. What if I do love you? I might go mad in a jeweler's and steal pearls. I might watch a man executed, and laugh. Anything like that I might be capable of. But not what you want. No, my friend. You're a romantic peasant. You're letting your hopes run off with your good sense. [*He does not answer. Lips tightly pressed together he stares at her.*] Now, shall we cut this short? Brace up, man! I'll make it up to you.

KOVACS. How?

OLYMPIA. What would you say if I were to tell you that the Emperor may be discussing you at this very moment? He wants a riding master for his daughter. I've written my father to recommend you. Of the hundreds the Emperor might have chosen, you will have the place. Many a great career's begun as riding master. Well? Are you pleased or not?

KOVACS. To be paid off?

OLYMPIA. You may put it so, if you like.

KOVACS. You'd make a groom of me. You think that's all a peasant's good for.

OLYMPIA. You should know that without my telling you. I think that's all we have to say. [*Once more she faces him squarely.*] You've got charm, but it's a peasant's charm. Your talents are a peasant's. Your gift with horses is a peasant's. Your shrewdness is a peasant's. [*He takes a step toward her. She draws back.*] Your insolence is the only false note about you, peasant! For such ambitions my ancestors broke yours on the

wheel. Back to your kind, my friend. You cannot change your kind by dressing up.

KOVACS [*dangerous*]. An alienist could tell you what you're doing to me. Alienists understand this kind of torture. We'll let it go at that. You've drawn your blood. I hope you're satisfied.

OLYMPIA. Poor punctured dreamer! Can't you be sensible and see that I've no use for your dreams? Does that make me a sadist? Go your way, now. You've had your fling. Whatever it was like, it's over. Forget about it. Go in for strong drink and . . . you're a man . . . for beautiful women. But down there. With your own kind.

[*A pause, then.*]

KOVACS. May I leave now, Princess?

OLYMPIA. Yes.

[*The PRINCESS enters left.*]

PRINCESS. Olympia, are you staying out here forever? [*An instant's pause as she takes in the situation.*] Are you, Captain? You've kept us waiting a long time.

KOVACS. Will you forgive me, Princess, if I do not play to-night?

[*A formal bow.*]

PRINCESS. Not play? Why not?

KOVACS. I must be going.

PRINCESS. Going? Where?

KOVACS. To get a few stiff drinks and look for some pretty girls.

[*He goes quickly left. A pause, then.*]

PRINCESS. My poor game of bridge! It's preposterous, my dear! There were the three of us, Albert, the Captain and I, waiting for that French Ambassador. Now that he's come, the Captain's gone and we're three again. And ever since nine I've

been trying. . . . Well, I give it up
Of course, there's Lina, but . . .

OLYMPIA. You're deliberately chattering about your bridge!

PRINCESS. Yes.

OLYMPIA [*suffering*]. Why?

PRINCESS. Well, my dear, now that this other thing is over, I thought we might as well carry on as usual.

OLYMPIA. Over and done with!

PRINCESS. Did you kill him?

OLYMPIA. Yes.

PRINCESS [*pause, then*]. Of course, if telling me about it will help you any . . . [*Pause, then.*] Was it so painful?

OLYMPIA. Frightfully.

PRINCESS [*down behind her*]. You must have been really cruel.

OLYMPIA. I was.

PRINCESS. As bad as that?

OLYMPIA. I shouldn't have thought I could have said such things.

PRINCESS. Really!

OLYMPIA. Nothing less would have served, though.

PRINCESS. Of course not!

OLYMPIA. If I hadn't said what I did, he might have forgiven me tomorrow. I had to strike as only a woman can strike . . . only a soldier.

PRINCESS. Well?

OLYMPIA. Oh, it's final. [*She looks into her mother's face.*] Why don't you say something? Are you sorry for him?

PRINCESS. No. I'm lost in admiration for you. How could you stand it?

OLYMPIA. I couldn't have stood it . . . if I hadn't loved him. But I believe in the weapon I used. I believe in the inequality of men. I believe that even his love besmirches me! [*She springs defiant and des-*

perate to her feet.] I believe all that! I do! I do!

PRINCESS. It hurts, though.

OLYMPIA. More than I thought anything could hurt. But it had to be. And it was the only way.

PRINCESS. To end it.

OLYMPIA. I killed that man as Peter the Great killed the son he loved. For his country's sake and in complete good faith.

PRINCESS. What a comfort, my dear, to know that whatever one has to do that's disagreeable, some king has set a precedent for it!

OLYMPIA. I've done this so thoroughly that I shall sleep to-night. Quietly for the first time since we came here.

[*LINA enters left.*]

LINA. Jenny, my dear, ought you to keep the French Ambassador waiting? . . . Why, where's the Captain?

PRINCESS. I don't know. He may have stepped into the ballroom.

LINA [*to OLYMPIA*]. Isn't he going to play, Olympia?

OLYMPIA. Why ask me?

[*Walks away lighting a cigarette.*]

PRINCESS. I've given up bridge for to-night. I'm going to bed.

OLYMPIA. I'll come, too. Just let me finish this cigarette.

PRINCESS. Lina, if you don't mind, I'll stay here with Olympia. [*As LINA does not leave, she adds.*] Make my apologies to the Frenchman, that's a dear, and tell Albert I shall look for him at the station in the morning.

LINA. You call the game off?

PRINCESS. Yes. Good night, Lina.

LINA. Good night. Don't think me indiscreet if I say that something in the atmosphere of this room tells

me what's happened. It had to be. It's absolutely correct. It makes me very happy.

PRINCESS. Good *night*, Lina.

LINA. Good night. I shall be at the station, too, to meet your husband.

PRINCESS. You? So early?

LINA. Do you mind? I want to be there. Dearest Jenny, I don't mean to annoy you, but I'll confess that I still love your husband.

[*Goes quickly left.*]

PRINCESS [*pause, then*]. Shall we walk in the garden for a little?

OLYMPIA. No.

PRINCESS. Do you want to go straight to bed?

OLYMPIA. I'd really like to go back into the ballroom. I want more light and noise and music. Only, the dancing's over.

PRINCESS. There's practically no one left. We mustn't be the last. Why don't you try something to drink? A nice liqueur.

OLYMPIA. You have one, if you like.

PRINCESS. Oh, no! I daren't! I've just smoked a very strong Havana cigar. My heart's still. . . . [*A gesture indicates palpitation. Sits on sofa. Sighs.*] Ah, well, Venice tomorrow! I must say I'm not sorry. Dear Venice never lets me down. I drift along the Grand Canal in the early morning and every year the palaces seem more beautiful. I think of your dear, dead husband and how his ancestors were doges there. That almost makes Venice your personal property, doesn't it? Well, so it should be, but for Garibaldi. What is there about dreaming in a gondola? [OLYMPIA *has moved slowly down behind chair 2.* KREHL *enters, helmet on arm and stands respectfully*

at attention.] Yes? What do you want?

KREHL. I make a thousand apologies to Your Highness. I had the honor to be presented to Your Highness at the ball this evening. If I may presume to refresh Your Highness' memory, I am Johann Wolfgang Krehl, Colonel of the Imperial Royal Gendarmerie, in command of this district. I humbly beg Your Highness' permission to divulge information on a matter of the utmost importance.

PRINCESS [*rising calmly*]. Of course!

KREHL. I beg to suggest that Your Highness might do well to make our interview private.

PRINCESS. This lady is my daughter.

KREHL. As Your Highness pleases. [To OLYMPIA.] Johann Wolfgang Krehl, Colonel of the Imperial Royal Gendarmerie. [*A bow and back to the PRINCESS.*] I shall relate my story as it happened. I come direct from the telephone to make my report. At precisely twelve-forty this evening, the Vienna police telephoned me at my office. They refused to speak to any one but myself. My desk sergeant informed Vienna that I was to be reached here, where my duty had called me, at the birthday celebration. At twelve-forty-two, immediately after I received my desk sergeant's report, the Vienna police succeeded in reaching me here. In the course of our conversation I gained the following information. One Meyrowski, a famous international swindler, is stopping in this hotel. I am ordered to place him at once under surveillance and to arrest him if he makes the slightest attempt to escape. An

official from Vienna is on his way here and will take charge of the case in the morning.

PRINCESS. All this is intensely interesting, but I don't see what we have to do with it.

KREHL. If you please, Your Highness. The swindler is here disguised as a Hungarian Hussar officer. This appears to be a favorite disguise of his. Captain Kovacs is neither Kovacs nor a Captain, but Meyrowski and a criminal with a long record. He is well known to the police of all the capitals of Europe. His last exploit was the robbery of the Spanish Embassy in Paris. As swindler, hotel burglar, exploiter of women, card-sharp, forger and gentleman burglar, it is to be doubted if Europe holds his equal. He speaks eleven languages.

[*A pause.*]

PRINCESS [*semi-conscious*]. The Fr . . . Fr . . . French Ambassador vouched for him!

KREHL. His Excellency could hardly have known who he was!

[*Pause.*]

OLYMPIA. What's to be done?

KREHL. My position is very delicate. I have had the honor of seeing Your Highnesses in the Captain's company. Riding in the morning. Playing cards in the evening. I hope I know my duty to the family of the Emperor's first Aide-de-Camp. My duty seemed to be to inform Your Highness before I proceeded further. I may say that I should have done so even if my instructions from Vienna had been less specific. "Personages of the highest rank," so my instructions said, "must be protected." Thus I observe, but I do not arrest.

PRINCESS. Thank you for that. Olympia, this is awful!

OLYMPIA. Mother, it's fatal.

PRINCESS [*to KREHL*]. I must ask you to go away and leave us quite, quite alone for a little. After that we may be able to discuss things further. Just a few minutes while I collect my thoughts. Because we shall have to be very cool about this and very clever. There must not be a scandal!

KREHL. Assuredly not, Your Highness.

PRINCESS. My God!

OLYMPIA. Mother!

PRINCESS [*by the sofa*]. Your father to-morrow morning! At seven! And the place filled with newspaper men. Making notes in their notebooks. Oh, this affair can't wait. It's got to be faced here and now. No, not here. In our rooms. No, not there. [*To KREHL.*] Go away, now, and come back. Take care you don't start talk outside. Tell them you're asking a favor of us. Something you want us to do for you at Court.

KREHL. I am at Your Highness' orders. How soon shall I come back?

PRINCESS. Five . . . four . . . two minutes. . . Just give me time . . . [*KREHL salutes and goes right.*] A little air. That's what I need, Olympia. Two minutes in the garden. [*Starts. Stops with her hand on the curtain at back.*] My God!

OLYMPIA. Mother, what now?

PRINCESS. I've just remembered that letter of yours. Do you realize that, at this very moment, your father may be standing in the Emperor's presence, pleading with him to place his beloved child in a criminal's

hands? I must have air! I will have air!

OLYMPIA [*restraining her*]. No. . . . Careful, mother. . . . There may be people out that way. . . . Come through the reading room.

PRINCESS. Quite right, my dear. Through the reading room. And smiling. Can you still smile?

OLYMPIA. I think so. Why? Can't you?

PRINCESS. Give me a minute. There? How's that?

OLYMPIA. Well. All right.

PRINCESS. Then let's go quickly before it slips. [*They go left.*]

CURTAIN BURLINGAME
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ACT TWO

[SCENE: *Same as Act One. Ten minutes later.*

AT RISE: *As the curtain rises, the PRINCESS and OLYMPIA enter left.*]

PRINCESS [*still smiling*]. I'm a little calmer I think. At least, physically. [*Sits on sofa.*] Do you know, I believe fresh air really is good for one! [*A sigh.*] How long was I out there?

OLYMPIA [*between the sofa and chair 1*]. Ten minutes.

PRINCESS. Do you suppose the Sergeant's been and gone?

OLYMPIA. The Colonel, mother.

PRINCESS. Have it your own way.

OLYMPIA. You don't need to keep smiling indefinitely.

PRINCESS. I'm not smiling. That's a muscular contraction due to agony; I can't stop it. Wait a minute. [*She makes an effort.*] There. Is it going off?

OLYMPIA. Slowly.

PRINCESS. Did you find my diamond monogram?

OLYMPIA. I found everything. The big pieces are all in the safe and the small ones are just as we left them. I even counted the pearls.

PRINCESS. It's too appalling! And he has the impudence to claim he knows your father! He says they

went walking together in Karlsbad! We may be fools, my dear, but your father would certainly never be taken in by . . .

OLYMPIA. Of course not, mother! But what are we going to do?

PRINCESS. I don't know yet but I'm certain to know presently. You shouldn't expect me to know yet. One has to approach these things by easy stages. If only the police keep their heads! [*Rises.*] We shall have to take matters in our own hands. Only something must be done—and quickly. [*Turning to OLYMPIA.*] To begin with, you'd better confess everything!

OLYMPIA. What have I to confess?

PRINCESS. What was there between you?

OLYMPIA. Nothing.

PRINCESS. How much nothing?

OLYMPIA. Really nothing. An innocent flirtation, if you like. That's putting it pretty strong. [*Sits on sofa.*]

PRINCESS [*standing center*]. It's too dreadful! Your father! If ever he hears that you . . . with such a man. . . .

OLYMPIA. Don't! I should kill myself now, if I didn't love papa so.

PRINCESS. Don't you love your mother?

OLYMPIA. Of course, mother.

[*Rises. They kiss.*]

PRINCESS. And the Court! And Lina! Lina! Lina! All those legions and legions of Linas! And the Emperor or your father, either! Your eyes I think of—I'd rather take poison. You know how the Emperor is about such things. We needn't look for mercy. Not from the Emperor or your father, either! Your father—your father palming off a jailbird upon the Imperial family. [*Sits chair 2.*] What did you say in that letter? I hope you weren't enthusiastic.

OLYMPIA. I didn't have to be. You know how father is when I want something. I'm afraid I *was* enthusiastic, though.

PRINCESS. Just how far did you let yourself go?

OLYMPIA. I said: "Dear Papa: Prove to me that you love me."

PRINCESS. Were you mad?

OLYMPIA. I had to let my feelings break out somehow.

[*Rises suddenly and comes a few steps down stage left.*]

PRINCESS [*standing center*]. I see! Like measles! [*Suddenly hopeful.*] Perhaps the letter never reached your father!

OLYMPIA. I registered it.

PRINCESS. Oh, why *don't* I end it all? Ten grains of morphine would end it forever! [*Tears.*] I'm quite serious, my dear. We're done for. [*Suddenly savage.*] Why *won't* you confess?

OLYMPIA. *Il n'y a rien à confesser, maman. Tu peux me croire. Tu me connais.*

PRINCESS. I suppose I must.

OLYMPIA [*bitterly*]. My wonderful gilded peasant! I'm very proud that I could control myself!

PRINCESS. It wouldn't make any difference now if you hadn't. [*A shocked gesture from OLYMPIA.*] I didn't mean that, really. [*A knock.*] There's our gendarme. [*A sigh.*] Come!

[*KREHL enters left as usual and stands center.*]

KREHL. I have already presumed to report twice.

PRINCESS. I went out to take the air. My daughter has been examining our jewel cases.

KREHL. I trust that nothing is missing?

PRINCESS [*a snivel*]. He has robbed us of nothing but our peace of mind. [*Recovering herself.*] Now, then. Can any one overhear us?

KREHL. The ball is over. [*At the curtains, back.*] The park is empty. [*Closing the curtains.*] Silence reigns.

[*Down to chair 1 where the PRINCESS is sitting.*]

PRINCESS. Very well. Now the essentials are to be shrewd and keep cool. First, the situation. On my daughter's part, innocent flirtation. On mine: some rubbers of bridge. You don't look very intelligent. Don't you know what flirtation is?

KREHL. Most certainly I know, Your Highness. I have four children.

PRINCESS [*rising in horror*]. There is no conceivable connection!

KREHL. Forgive me, Your Highness! I must have been thinking of bridge.

PRINCESS. Bridge is a game of cards!

KREHL. To be sure it is, Your Highness!

PRINCESS. A harmless game of cards, played by four. Flirtation is an equally harmless game, played by two.

KREHL. I am enormously obliged to Your Highness. Forgive my ignorance, Your Highness. I live in the country, Your . . .

PRINCESS. Come to the point. Bridge on my part. Flirtation on my daughter's. Alas! I warn you to be shrewd and keep your head. You will pay dearly for any blunder that involves this family. I dislike threats but you may pay with your life. I shall speak to you as a soldier of the Emperor and as the father of four. And I am speaking as brutally as though His Majesty were here watching us with his cold, blue, Imperial eyes. [KREHL looks for His Majesty.] No lies. No secrets. No pretense. You are to speak frankly, too, Olympia. You can pretend that the Colonel is a good, kind doctor.

[She sits again in chair 1.

KREHL shifts forward to catch every word of OLYMPIA's remarks.]

OLYMPIA [by the sofa]. The man interested me. He aroused a passing sympathy. I trusted his officer's uniform. He misunderstood my intentions and tried to take advantage. The more I saw of him, the more impertinent he grew. I understand that now. However, I put him in his place. I sent him packing. That's all.

PRINCESS. You can see that the case requires imagination.

KREHL. Indeed, Your Highness!

PRINCESS. Well, then, don't look surprised at what I'm going to say.

Clearly, we shall get nowhere until we know what the man proposes. I told you not to look surprised. You might even try to look intelligent. You have a most disconcerting habit of letting your mouth hang open. Get over it. It's probably adenoids. You will fetch the man here.

KREHL. What man, Your Highness?

PRINCESS. What man?

KREHL. Not Meyrowski?

PRINCESS. Sh-sh—

KREHL. Surely not Meyrowski!

PRINCESS. Who else?

KREHL [dizzy]. He's in the bar. I'll go for him myself.

PRINCESS [rising to stop him]. You will do no such thing, yourself. You will go out into the lobby. You will retain the services of a page. The page will find him and tell him I want him to make a fourth at bridge.

KREHL [at attention]. I shall go out. Find a page. The page will tell him you want him here to make a fourth at a flirtation. I should say—bridge.

PRINCESS. You should, indeed!

[KREHL salutes and hurries out right.]

OLYMPIA. And what shall I do, mother?

PRINCESS. You will stay where you are.

OLYMPIA. I'd rather not.

PRINCESS. You will stay where you are! I've heard enough from you. I'm in command here now. I give the orders.

[OLYMPIA sits sofa. PRINCESS sits chair 1. A pause. Tapping of feet. Nerves. KREHL returns without knocking and goes center.]

KREHL. The page has gone for him.

PRINCESS. Then we shall wait quite calmly.

[*A long pause.*]

KREHL. The radioactive thermal springs of our exquisitely located and appointed health resort appear greatly to have benefited Your Highness' health.

PRINCESS. Greatly.

[*A briefer pause.*]

KREHL [*to OLYMPIA*]. Your Highness' health, no less?

PRINCESS. Her health, no less.

[*Another pause.*]

KREHL. May we hope that the presence of both Your Highnesses will once again grace our beautifully located and appointed health resort next season?

PRINCESS. I see no reason for our going elsewhere. I doubt if we ever go anywhere else again.

KREHL. Your Highness.

[*Bows. Pause.*]

OLYMPIA. Mother!

PRINCESS. What?

OLYMPIA. Shouldn't we ask the gendarme to sit down?

PRINCESS. No. Let him stand.

[*Pause. Then a knock.*] Come in!

[*Her hand to her heart as*

KOVACS enters. He carries his military cap in his right hand and his cloak over his left arm. Smiling ever so slightly to himself he comes directly to the PRINCESS.]

KOVACS. Princess! Is it bridge again? So late? [*Chuckles.*] Well, why not? [*No one replies. A pause. He puts his cap on the smoking table and lays his cloak carefully over the back of chair 2. KOVACS discovers KREHL.*] Is this your fourth?

KREHL. Colonel Krehl in command of the local gendarmerie. I call upon you, in the name of the law, to establish your identity. [*KOVACS regards him in dumb amazement.*] I repeat. Will you be good enough to show your identification papers. [*KOVACS looks dumbly at the ladies.*] I make this request because I have reason to believe that you are really the famous Meyrowski, swindler, card sharp, blackmailer and jailbird.

[*At the word "swindler" OLYMPIA moves uneasily between sofa and door right. The PRINCESS rises, too, and stands with OLYMPIA behind the sofa.*]

KOVACS [*looking after PRINCESS*]. Is he mad?

KREHL. You are Meyrowski.

KOVACS. My dear Colonel, you are committing a blunder so stupendous that it is likely to earn you a sudden and dishonorable loss of employment.

KREHL. You are Meyrowski, the swindler. You may as well admit it. At seven to-morrow morning an official will arrive from Vienna with your complete record.

KOVACS. An official from Vienna?

KREHL. An official of the Vienna secret police. You may continue to deny your identity if you like, but only as my guest. Do you understand me? Do you still hold out? [*KOVACS looks worried.*] No use, my boy. Your finger prints will be here in the morning. [*KOVACS seems to appeal dumbly to the ladies.*] Now! Are you or are you not Meyrowski?

KOVACS. I am.

KREHL. That's better.

[*General movement. KREHL puts his helmet on the com-*

sole. The PRINCESS retires, tottering, to column B. OLYMPIA moves left toward her mother. Only KOVACS stands still.]

KOVACS. You're right. There's no use in denying.

KREHL. According to law, I should lock you up here and now. Since, however, you have impudently insinuated yourself into the highest circles . . .

PRINCESS. Please! Please, Colonel! Don't be uncivil to him! [To KOVACS.] I suppose you'll be asking what we have to do with this. . . .

KOVACS. No. No. I shall ask no such thing!

PRINCESS. Wouldn't you like to know?

KOVACS. I do know.

KREHL [*hand on his sword*]. Be careful what you say!

PRINCESS. If you please, Colonel, do not bounce about! [*She stands between KREHL and KOVACS.*] You should be more careful with metal objects. This most decidedly is *not* an argument of that sort. [To KOVACS.] Now, then. It isn't easy to begin, but . . .

KOVACS. Perhaps I can help you. You've found me out. I *am* Meyrowski. I've served a dozen terms in a dozen prisons. I've been expelled from both Austria and Hungary.

KREHL. You may omit your autobiography. You can say nothing that will prevent my taking you off with me, arresting you, locking you up. . . .

PRINCESS. You will arrest no one. You will lock no one up. I assure you, Colonel, all that is out of the question. You seem to be bent on a scandal at any price. A Court scan-

dal, at that. Let me remind you. You are a soldier and you have four children. This man will be permitted to escape. Those are my orders. You may arrange his escape as you please. I leave the technicalities to you. Is that quite clear?

KREHL [*bowing*]. Quite, Your Highness!

PRINCESS [*to KOVACS*]. You heard what I said then?

KOVACS. Perfectly. I'm to run away.

PRINCESS. Just so.

KOVACS. I refuse.

PRINCESS. You can't!

KOVACS. I do. Flatly.

PRINCESS. You refuse to run away?

KOVACS. I shouldn't dream of running. [*Sits calmly chair 1. OLYMPIA rises from corner sofa and goes slowly up stage to column B where she listens incredulous and enraged.*] Why should I? What have I done? Nothing. I'm in no danger here. I can get justice. I can get lawyers. I'm certainly not afraid of courts. I've served all my sentences to the bitter end. Let the Colonel arrest me. What can he charge me with? Wearing this uniform. A misdemeanor under Paragraph 115. Three or four days in jail. What else? The use of a false name. A couple of days more. In all, a week at the outside before I'm free. A week for me who have served years in the best prisons of Europe! I don't owe a penny. Nothing is missing that I've heard of. I've danced and ridden here. But those aren't crimes. And I've played bridge. Well, Princess, on that count you'll testify I always lost, even to the game you play.

PRINCESS. Can one be expected to survive that?

KREHL. Oh, no, Your Highness! No, indeed!

KOVACS. I most certainly shall not run. No. If I do anything, I shall walk. At my leisure. From one newspaper office to another. [*Consternation.*] After my week in jail, that is. I shall begin with the big foreign papers. My witnesses are all the visitors at this resort. I can't promise you a world-wide sensation, but then we mustn't ask too much. My memoirs won't do badly, though. "Meyrowski's Adventures at the Austrian Court." [*Rises.*] "How Meyrowski got himself made riding master to an Archduchess thanks to his friends at Court." [*Walks about.*] There are readable articles in my memoirs. Don't you think so? The Paris "*Matin*" used to pay me well for similar things. A million circulation week days. More on Sundays.

KREHL [*a threatening movement toward him*]. You blackmailing scoundrel!

KOVACS [*smiling*]. Oh, all of that!

KREHL [*draws his sword a few inches out of scabbard*]. We'll see about that!

PRINCESS [*springing between them again*]. No, leave him alone!

KREHL. But—!

PRINCESS. This is just what I've been waiting for! Only I couldn't find any way to suggest it. Thank heaven, he's come to it himself! [*To KOVACS, as KREHL withdraws center.*] So then! Now that we can talk business what will you take? For your discreet disappearance and everlasting silence?

KOVACS [*so friendly*]. Princess, I shall be charmed to leave to-morrow

morning. I'll send you a wire from Switzerland to say that I've been thrown from my horse and broken both my legs. That will dispose of my Court appointment. I'll even forge a doctor's certificate, if you insist. And give you my word of honor . . . as a horseman . . . that no one will ever hear a breath of any of this. There will have been a Captain Kovacs who went away, broke both his legs and never was heard of more. I shall not use his name again. Nor wear his uniform.

PRINCESS. How much?

KOVACS. Not for money!

PRINCESS. No? What *do* you want?

KOVACS. I love your daughter.

[*He says this quite simply.*

OLYMPIA *is standing now, by chair 2. He looks sharply at OLYMPIA as he says it. KREHL's hand goes to his sword again.*]

PRINCESS [*diving between the two men*]. For God's sake, will you leave that sword alone! You *must* keep your head! [*To KOVACS.*] Go on, my boy. Explain yourself.

KOVACS. Princess, I am the victim of my love. In this most tragic scene, I came to a place to work. That's as *we* put it. To stay just long enough to make my clean-up, and then vanish. Things didn't go as I expected. I fell in love. I could do nothing that I came to do. I could not even leave. I've known from the first day how this would end. Days I've been waiting for this very ending. I know I'm mad. I've never been in love before.

PRINCESS. What do you want?

KOVACS. Something I can discuss only with my goddess.

[*Turns to OLYMPIA.*]

KREHL [*sword again*]. Let me cut down the swine!

PRINCESS [*coldly, restraining him*]. You will cut him neither up nor down! What's more, if you don't stop dancing about this way, you may be sorry!

KREHL. I?

PRINCESS. Yes, you. Even my patience has its limits.

KREHL. Your Highness, am I the criminal here?

PRINCESS. I shouldn't wonder if you were! [*To OLYMPIA who is crying softly.*] Stop sniveling! Everything we have in the world is at stake now. I may as well admit it. This fellow knows it just as well as I. The fate of the Emperor's first Aide-de-Camp hangs on this moment. And the fate of the future Empress' first lady-in-waiting. We must act quickly and decisively.

OLYMPIA. What do you mean by act?

PRINCESS. I'm in no mood for explanations.

[*Leaves her and comes majestically to the sofa where she stands.*]

OLYMPIA. I can't think, mother, what you want of me.

PRINCESS. I don't want anything. How can you think I *could* want anything! The choice is up to you. If you choose public scandal and disgrace, your father, your poor father, and I are ready to stand by you. We'll go to South America. For good. No. No. We won't do that. Your father won't survive this. And, if he does, he'll see to it that *we* don't. [KREHL *wipes away a tear.*] I'm not exaggerating. Meyrowski has ridden with our colors on his shoulder. We've pushed Meyrowski into

the Emperor's household. You've danced with Meyrowski every night. Oh, yes. I know! And I've played bridge with him. And won his money. I knew you'd bring that up. So I admit it. But it's for you to choose what the end will be. I hope you will not hesitate. Ettingens never do. They may die, but they do not hesitate.

[*A pause.*]

KREHL. I shall withdraw, Your Highness, at this juncture. But I shall spend the night in the hotel.

PRINCESS. Spend it in hell!

KREHL. I beg Your Highness's pardon?

PRINCESS. Granted.

KREHL. Your Highness made some remark that escaped me.

PRINCESS. It's just as well. My emotions got the better of me for the moment. The explosive mood is passed and I shall not repeat. Good night. You can go.

[*As he reaches the door the three remaining in the room move toward one another. He senses this and turns astonished. He moves center and it is evident that he is about to make a few remarks. They draw back again as he turns. He looks at them, thinks better of his remarks and goes left.*]

KOVACS. If I should ask my goddess for what I want, how would she answer?

OLYMPIA [*comes weakly down to her mother*]. How would you answer, mother, if you were I?

PRINCESS. How can I say? Your jailbird hasn't asked anything of me. Had he done so, I should not hesitate. At anything. The honor of an

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ancient family is at stake. Six hundred years of it. However, he hasn't asked anything of me.

KOVACS. Don't be offended, will you?

[*Brief pause.*]

OLYMPIA. This is a nightmare, mother.

PRINCESS. It is one of those situations which do not permit the mother to sacrifice herself.

OLYMPIA. Perhaps you'd better leave us alone together.

PRINCESS. You're not afraid?

OLYMPIA. No.

PRINCESS. I shall leave you, then. You will, of course, defend yourself to the bitter end. I shall wait in the reading room. Call, if you need me. If I don't answer, you may know that I have gone to join my ancestors.

[*They kiss. The PRINCESS goes left. A pause.*]

OLYMPIA. What do you want?

KOVACS. You.

OLYMPIA. Card sharp! Jailbird! Now I see why you tried before.

KOVACS. You see.

OLYMPIA. You knew the law was closing in.

KOVACS. I knew . . . I could have made my getaway this afternoon. I didn't. Was that like a peasant?

OLYMPIA. You're no peasant. I take all that back.

[*She faces him, hatred blazing in her eyes.*]

KOVACS. Your eyes don't frighten me any more. Odd, isn't it, how things have changed around now I've been exposed? It's a relief to be exposed. Now we can be ourselves, my dear. I'm not pleading, now. What I say, goes! The way you look at me ought to burn me up. I know what's

on your mind. You'd like to throw me into a dungeon, wouldn't you? And leave me there to starve.

OLYMPIA. Yes, I should. Awfully.

KOVACS. Pity you can't. Pity, these aren't the Middle Ages.

OLYMPIA. Don't try to keep up playing the Captain. Be yourself, jailbird! Thug!

KOVACS. The French aristocrats at the guillotine must have felt much as you feel now.

OLYMPIA. I daresay.

KOVACS. Horrified, but happy!

OLYMPIA. Happy!

KOVACS. Happy to make the supreme sacrifice for royalty.

OLYMPIA. My suffering redeems the ignominy you force upon me.

KOVACS. That's beautifully put. A bit flamboyant, perhaps. [*Sits on sofa.*] This is martyrdom, then.

OLYMPIA. What else?

KOVACS. Well, I wonder you haven't thought of suicide?

OLYMPIA. Would suicide save my father? Or the good name of the Imperial Family? Or my reputation? It would make matters worse. I'm not afraid of my executioner.

KOVACS. Perhaps you'd like a drink?

OLYMPIA. That would be your idea!

KOVACS. The idea may not be original, but it's sound. Drink deadens pain.

OLYMPIA. Why not ether, then? No. Martyrs have to endure their agonies.

KOVACS. I must say you're carrying things off well.

OLYMPIA. Why not? What you are doing to me is what I should expect if I were captured by a Balkan

brigand. But it can neither stain nor touch me.

KOVACS. You've no idea what a load that takes off my mind! I do admire your courage, though.

OLYMPIA. Stop playing Kovacs! Kovacs is no more! We're ourselves, now. A Balkan brigand and his victim!

KOVACS. An hour ago you were in love with me.

OLYMPIA. Never with you! With *him!*

KOVACS. How can you keep us apart?

OLYMPIA. Easily.

[*A pause.*]

KOVACS. I should be glad . . . Forgive me . . . He would be glad if you'd sit down.

OLYMPIA. You needn't bother with civility. I don't want that from you.

KOVACS. Would my assaulting you make things easier for you?

OLYMPIA. Much easier. [*Sits chair 1.*] Come on! I'm waiting!

KOVACS. Thank you for your encouragement.

OLYMPIA. *Must* you make fun of me? Can I help myself?

KOVACS. Who can, if you can't?

OLYMPIA. I'm your prisoner. I'm completely at your mercy. Brigand. Well, isn't that what you are? And isn't this my money or my life?

KOVACS. Only your life. And only an hour of that. I ask it as a man.

OLYMPIA. You're not a man.

KOVACS. What am I?

OLYMPIA. A calamity! I've been thrown to you like a sailor thrown into a raging sea to drown!

KOVACS [*behind her, over her shoulder*]. Perhaps Your Highness

would care to express some dying wish?

OLYMPIA [*a pause, then*]. Yes, I should. I should like to ask you a few questions.

KOVACS. Please, do!

OLYMPIA [*low*]. Have you . . . ever . . . committed murder?

KOVACS. No, never.

OLYMPIA [*relief*]. I see. Just a thief? No more?

KOVACS. That's all.

OLYMPIA. I suppose jewels are your specialty?

KOVACS. Yes. I suppose they are!

OLYMPIA. And women, I suppose, are your special victims?

KOVACS. Well not in that sense. One seldom has to steal from women.

OLYMPIA. I don't understand.

KOVACS. Jewels usually come as gifts from women.

OLYMPIA. Don't lie.

KOVACS. I'm not. You'd be amazed at woman's generosity. In certain moments of . . . shall I say ecstasy?

OLYMPIA. Ecstasy?

KOVACS. You don't believe in ecstasy.

OLYMPIA. Oh. And this proposal of marriage?

KOVACS. That's often a good opening.

OLYMPIA. Poor women!

KOVACS. *Generous* women!

OLYMPIA. What were you after here?

KOVACS. A string of pearls.

OLYMPIA [*her hand to her string*]. *Mine?*

KOVACS. Nothing of yours, my goddess.

OLYMPIA. A sentimental thief! How boring!

KOVACS. I was considering your mother's pearls.

OLYMPIA. Were you considering her ecstasy, too?

KOVACS. No, God forbid. There are simpler ways to gain the confidence of ladies.

OLYMPIA. Losing at bridge?

KOVACS. Yes.

OLYMPIA. That's why you rode with me.

KOVACS. No. Don't say that. With you . . .

OLYMPIA [*rising suddenly*]. Stick to your answers, please!

KOVACS. So sorry!

OLYMPIA. Have you been much in prison?

KOVACS. A good deal.

OLYMPIA. In the convict's uniform!

KOVACS. Never from choice.

OLYMPIA. How horrible! And my rose on your tunic.

KOVACS [*smiles as he destroys it*]. No. On *his*.

OLYMPIA. Where did you learn to ride.

KOVACS. America.

OLYMPIA. Under what name?

KOVACS. Monsieur Legrand.

OLYMPIA. What were you?

KOVACS. A bareback rider.

OLYMPIA. In . . .

KOVACS. A circus.

OLYMPIA. Your father?

KOVACS. Papa's a shoemaker. In Riga.

OLYMPIA. Where did you learn to wear *this* costume?

KOVACS. My uniform!

OLYMPIA. Uniform! On you it's fancy dress.

KOVACS [*a shrug of his shoulders*]. Either one has talent for dressing up or not. [*Pause.*] Is that all?

OLYMPIA. Yes.

KOVACS. No more you'd like to know?

OLYMPIA. That's all. [*She starts.*] Oh!

KOVACS. What's wrong?

OLYMPIA. Somebody's coming. I heard some one . . .

KOVACS. You may count on your mother to guard our privacy with her life. [*Goes behind her.*] Well? Time's getting short, you know.

OLYMPIA. My time is yours. What are you waiting for?

KOVACS. For a friendly word. Will you give me one?

OLYMPIA. No.

KOVACS. A friendly look, then?

OLYMPIA. No.

KOVACS. You love me.

OLYMPIA. No.

KOVACS. Him, then. That was.

OLYMPIA. Yes.

KOVACS. How can a costume change what a woman loves in a man?

OLYMPIA. A woman loves what a man is.

KOVACS. What a man is, is no more than his behavior. And behavior's no more than a costume. I can prove that by you.

OLYMPIA. By me?

KOVACS. An hour ago *you* were the executioner.

OLYMPIA. That's true.

KOVACS. You dressed yourself up in an executioner's behavior to hide your love. I found it. Why can't you find the man you love inside this shoddy thief's behavior?

OLYMPIA. Scoundrel! Scoundrel!

KOVACS. Don't call names! Answer me.

OLYMPIA. I won't look for him!

KOVACS. Will nothing move you?

OLYMPIA. Nothing. PUBLIC

[Pause.] LIB.

KOVACS. We're wasting time. Please! Just one friendly word!

OLYMPIA. No.

KOVACS. It will be too late in a minute.

OLYMPIA. Scoundrel!

KOVACS. Be glad it's I and not another! Isn't it better so?

OLYMPIA. No!

KOVACS. Why not?

OLYMPIA. I'd rather it were any one else. Some one I couldn't talk to. A Chinaman.

KOVACS. Why?

OLYMPIA. So I could keep my martyrdom pure!

KOVACS. It isn't pure with me?

OLYMPIA [crying]. No.

KOVACS. Then you do love me!

OLYMPIA. Yes. No. Not you. Him.

KOVACS. But, as a man, I . . .

OLYMPIA. You are *not* a man!

KOVACS. I am!

OLYMPIA. You're not! You're a calamity! You're just brute force!

KOVACS. Women usually like brute force in the men they love.

OLYMPIA. Don't torture me!

KOVACS. You tortured me!

OLYMPIA. I can't stand any more!

KOVACS [holding her arm]. Don't tremble. I'm not a peasant after all. Why be afraid of me?

OLYMPIA. I'm not afraid.

KOVACS. And since a brigand had to be, can't you be glad it's your own, a tried and true, week days and holidays, familiar, fireside brigand? Your family brigand whom you can't help loving?

OLYMPIA. Let me go! This is my martyrdom! I want to suffer!

KOVACS. I shan't let you suffer.

OLYMPIA. That isn't fair. I don't want to enjoy my martyrdom. Help me to keep it pure! Be vile to me! Please make yourself vile to me!

KOVACS. I couldn't! [Kisses her.] There! Did you suffer then?

OLYMPIA. No, you Apache! You beastly, low Apache!

KOVACS. Call me that name over and over until you learn how gentle brute force is.

OLYMPIA. Apache! Apache!

KOVACS [kisses her again]. Where shall I wait for you? I've only an hour of life. Dawn's coming. I've got to go at dawn.

OLYMPIA. You're no man. You're an executioner.

KOVACS [holding her fast, wraps her in his cloak]. Right. Executioner. Brigand. Calamity. Brute force.

OLYMPIA. Calamity!

KOVACS. Not man. Earth. Fire. Water.

OLYMPIA. Scoundrel! Apache!

KOVACS [tearing open the curtains at the back]. Look! Darkness! Empty, silent darkness. Let's get out of here. Down through the garden. Off by ourselves.

OLYMPIA [as he carries her out with him]. Murderer! Apache!

[A pause. Then the PRINCESS comes in. Looks around her. Draws her own conclusions. Lights a cigar. Sits in chair 1, to read a magazine. A knock.]

PRINCESS. Who's there?

[KREHL enters.]

KREHL [no encouragement from the PRINCESS who reads]. Your Highness, I take the liberty of reporting that I have just observed two

figures running across the terrace. A woman and a man . . .

PRINCESS [*deep in her magazine*]. How many children have you?

KREHL [*surprised*]. Four, Your Highness.

PRINCESS. How old's the youngest?

KREHL. Five.

PRINCESS. And the eldest?

KREHL. Fourteen.

PRINCESS. Boy?

KREHL. Boy.

PRINCESS. Hm. [*Continues reading. Pause.*]

KREHL. I'm certain I recognized those running figures, Your Highness . . .

PRINCESS [*looks up quietly*]. I think I shall make a general of your son. Not right away. In time. I'll see he's educated. Send him to me in Vienna in September.

KREHL. Your Highness! [*She resumes her reading.*] As I was saying, I'm certain I recognized . . .

PRINCESS [*looks up again*]. You must be sleepy.

KREHL. Well, if Your Highness thinks . . .

PRINCESS. Hm. [*Continues reading.*]

KREHL. Only, I recognized . . .

PRINCESS [*looks up*]. A wise man goes to bed when he's sleepy, Colonel. [*KREHL stands at attention.*] I think we'd better both of us do that. You, with the happy feeling that you have made a sacrifice for your child. I, envying you because I could not do as much for mine. Pity a mother whom fate has cheated, Colonel, of her mother's right to sacrifice herself. [*She holds out her hand. He kisses it.*] Good night . . . Good night . . . And thank you for these tears you let fall on my hand. [*She goes majestically left. He stares after her in dizzy admiration before he goes right.*]

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

[SCENE: *The same room. The morning following. The curtains at the back are open on the sunny terrace and on the garden, flowers, trees and sky. In the center of the room stands a long breakfast table laid for four. Four chairs around this table. One at each end. Two on the up-stage side. Numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. The former chairs 1 and 2 remain. The sofa is gone. The smoking table stands next to chair 1. The side doors are not required for this act as all the characters enter and leave by the terrace.*]

AT RISE: *The PRINCESS sits alone over her breakfast on chair 2. She*

drinks tea and eats rolls and butter. After a moment OLYMPIA comes from the terrace right.]

OLYMPIA. Good morning, mother.

PRINCESS. Good morning, my dear child!

OLYMPIA [*beside her mother, standing*]. Why didn't you call me? I did so want to be at the station to meet papa!

PRINCESS. You were sleeping so sweetly. I couldn't bear to call you.

OLYMPIA. But you know I always want to be on hand to meet papa. You know he likes to have me there. He loves me.

PRINCESS. Your mother loves you, too.

OLYMPIA. Yes. Well, I love papa.

PRINCESS. You've seen him, I suppose.

OLYMPIA. Yes. For a second. He came in to kiss me. He's changing now. I'm glad we didn't have time to talk. I can't lie to him.

PRINCESS. I can. What's more, I shall. [*She watches OLYMPIA closely. OLYMPIA moves to chair 3 and stands there.*] He's looking awfully well.

OLYMPIA. Isn't he!

PRINCESS. What a constitution! Fifty-eight, your father is, and would any one give him a day over forty? He looks thirty-five. Sit down, my dear. He'll join us presently. Before he takes his radioactive bath. He likes this water, you know. He believes in it.

OLYMPIA [*absently*]. Yes.

PRINCESS. Why don't you sit down? [*OLYMPIA sits on chair 3.*] Tea?

OLYMPIA. Please.

PRINCESS. Not having seen you since last night, I'm at a loss what to say.

OLYMPIA. Don't make it too strong, please.

PRINCESS. Make what too strong?

OLYMPIA. The tea.

PRINCESS. I'll put in some hot water. Is that weak enough?

OLYMPIA. That's perfect.

PRINCESS [*again watching her*]. The sun came up so brilliantly this morning I'm afraid we're in for a hot day. I was awake at four. It was hot then.

OLYMPIA [*drinking*]. Really?

PRINCESS. I lay awake from four on. Crying.

OLYMPIA [*unperturbed*]. What made you do that?

PRINCESS. I was upset. So terribly upset.

OLYMPIA [*after a gulp of tea*]. Do you feel better now?

PRINCESS. Yes. Though I don't suppose I *am* any better. I will say, however, that the future looks a little brighter. Certainly brighter than it did last night. I think I see new hope in your face, too. [*Pause. No answer.*] Perhaps I'm wrong. [*Pause. No comment. A sigh.*] I must get over being an optimist. [*A suspicious look.*] Olympia, isn't my hope justified?

OLYMPIA. Milk, please.

PRINCESS [*offended*]. Milk. [*Stands to carry the milk pitcher to OLYMPIA.*] Aren't you going to answer your mother's questions? [*OLYMPIA, instead of answering, holds out her teacup.*] Woman's life is one long sacrifice. [*Right turns to her place.*] Shall I butter you a roll?

OLYMPIA. I wish you would.

PRINCESS [*buttering*]. Believe me, my dearest, there are some secrets which only a mother's heart can understand.

OLYMPIA. Isn't that just a little thick, mother?

PRINCESS. A little thick?

OLYMPIA. The butter.

PRINCESS. Oh, forgive me, my dear. Forgive me. [*A sigh.*] I can spread butter as thin as any woman living. [*Buttering.*] Of course, there must have been a time, before there was any church, when a mother's heart was the only confessional.

OLYMPIA. That's a lovely thought, mother. Almost a poem.

PRINCESS. Oh, I don't ask you to tell me anything you don't want me

to know. . . . Here's your roll, my dear. . . . [*Passes it.*] I ask you absolutely nothing. . . . I buttered it very thin. . . . Nowadays poor mothers can't expect consideration. . . . [*Tearfully.*] Mothers are dreadfully treated, nowadays. [*Pause.*] Won't you please answer your mother's questions? [*Pause.*] The modern daughter has her own life to live. [*Pause.*] Her own life. And the poor mother . . . with her breaking heart . . . asks herself: [*Very tearful.*] "Why won't my daughter tell me what I want to know?" [*Pause.*] That's what the mother asks. Louder and louder! [*Pause.*] No answer. Only silence.

OLYMPIA. Well, that's a kind of answer, isn't it?

[*LINA enters from the terrace, right. Tourist costume, with hat and Alpine stick.*]

LINA. Am I intruding?

PRINCESS. No more than usual, Lina.

[*Busy at the table.*]

LINA [*seating herself on chair 4, at the end of the table right. To OLYMPIA.*] Well, your father looks every bit as young and handsome as he did when I was in love with him. [*From OLYMPIA to the PRINCESS.*] Butter me a roll, too, Jenny, while you're at it. [*Pause, then.*] You disappeared very suddenly last night.

PRINCESS. The ball wore me out and left me with a headache.

LINA. Aren't you being just a bit stingy with that butter?

PRINCESS. I thought you were reducing.

LINA. You mean you could do with a great deal less of me?

PRINCESS. Have it your own way. [*Butters heavily.*]

LINA [*to OLYMPIA*]. Did you have a headache, too?

PRINCESS. Yes.

OLYMPIA [*a moment later*]. No.

LINA. Well, which is it?

OLYMPIA. Mother persists in worrying about me!

LINA. Well, I can't blame her. I thought I saw you out in the garden.

PRINCESS. You saw *me*. I had the headache and I wanted air.

LINA. But *you* went to bed very late.

PRINCESS. Not *very* late. I read in there for a little, then . . .

[*Indicates reading room, right.*]

LINA. It was so warm I couldn't close my eyes. I just sat at my window all night long.

PRINCESS [*consternation*]. You sat at your window!

LINA. At my window. And looked out.

PRINCESS. Looked out. What at?

LINA. Oh, at the Park. Gardens are more romantic to me at night. Those great black trees and the shadows under them! One listens and hears sounds not heard by day.

PRINCESS. What kind of sounds?

LINA. Faint sounds. One senses lovers whispering.

PRINCESS. You must have been feeling very poetic, Lina!

LINA. Poetic and at peace. Did you know an officer of the gendarmerie paced up and down that terrace there all night. On guard. A very charming attention to us, I thought.

PRINCESS. They do their utmost for us here.

LINA [*after a pause*]. Has no one seen the Captain this morning?

PRINCESS. Not I.

LINA. I suppose you'll be riding to-day, as usual?

OLYMPIA. Not to-day. With papa here and . . . [GENERAL ETTINGEN comes up the steps to the terrace, center. OLYMPIA springs to her feet and runs to meet him.] Papa!

[The PRINCESS rises and moves toward her husband. LINA rises and stands by her place.]

GENERAL. Now! Now! Don't let me trouble you! Just give your father one more kiss, my pride and joy! [OLYMPIA kisses him. He deposits his cap and stick on the console and, during the following, the three ladies make room for him at the breakfast table. By the time he comes to it, OLYMPIA is at chair 1, the PRINCESS at chair 3, and chair 2 is ready for him. LINA retains chair 4.] Please don't let me disturb you. [Calling back.] Aren't you coming, Albert? [ALBERT appears on the terrace in Alpine costume.] Oh, there you are!

[Now he is seating the ladies most ceremoniously.]

ALBERT. Good morning, all.

GENERAL. Will you join us, Albert?

ALBERT. Thanks. I've had my breakfast.

LINA. In bed, as usual?

ALBERT. Anything wrong with that? I've breakfasted in bed these forty years.

LINA. Yes, I daresay!

ALBERT. You daresay, do you? Can you see any reason why I shouldn't breakfast where and how I choose? Are you beginning on me already?

GENERAL. Lina, I throw all the authority of my great military rank on Albert's side. Your tone has a

most ironic edge. Should I say edge or point?

PRINCESS. Barb, I should think.

GENERAL. Barb, then. It has a barb.

LINA [*yearning toward him*]. Well, if you say so, Philip! You're always right. In the whole world, you alone.

GENERAL. Don't get erotic, Lina.

PRINCESS [*to the GENERAL*]. What will you have for breakfast?

GENERAL. You don't expect me to breakfast before bathing! [*Then, hesitant.*] Or do you think perhaps I'd better?

PRINCESS. Of course, you'd better.

GENERAL [*decided*]. Then I shall breakfast lightly.

PRINCESS. Some ham?

GENERAL. Ham before bathing? Never in the world! Have you gone mad?

OLYMPIA. It's very good ham, father.

GENERAL. Well, if it's very good. [*He helps himself from the dish which OLYMPIA offers him.*] I might go bathing later. [*Viewing another plate with alarm.*] Ham, yes, my dear, but no salad!

OLYMPIA [*a little sternly*]. With salad.

GENERAL. Very well, then, *with!* [*Helps himself.*] I want to make the most of my one day here. I think I might bathe twice!

OLYMPIA. I shouldn't.

GENERAL. Then I shan't. [*Takes his tea.*] Thank you, my love. [*Drinks it.*] Believe me, for the General who spends his life commanding others there's no such holiday as being commanded himself. Don't be afraid to order me around, my angels. I dote upon it.

[*Kisses his wife's hand.*]

ALBERT. How any one could take exception to a man's breakfasting in bed!

LINA. Nobody took exception.

PRINCESS. Won't you stop wrangling, please. Philip's not interested.

GENERAL. I'm glad to see that Lina hasn't changed. She was the same at twenty.

LINA. Thank you, Philip. I was just saying the very same thing of you!

GENERAL. Lina, *don't* get erotic!

PRINCESS [*to the GENERAL*]. Have you reserved your bathing house?

LINA. You needn't change the subject, Jenny. I'm not so erotic I can't control myself.

PRINCESS. That's what *you* think. [*Back to the GENERAL.*] Have you reserved your bathing house?

GENERAL. No, dearest, and I shan't. I think that when *I* go down to bathe they will have a house for me.

PRINCESS. They won't, dearest, unless you reserve one.

GENERAL. I shall reserve it, then. Albert and I will walk down together. We always do what our women tell us. [*As the PRINCESS offers him jam.*] No jam, I thank you.

PRINCESS. You must.

GENERAL [*helping himself*]. As you say, my own.

[*Takes the plate, but does not eat.*]

LINA. How do you live without your women, Philip?

GENERAL. I am as wretched without my women, Lina, as you would be without your tongue.

PRINCESS. Lina's so full of bright observations and ideas about us. I

sometimes wonder she doesn't put us in a book.

LINA. You're most unfair to me, I think.

ALBERT. I don't. Any one who could take exception to a man's breakfasting in bed! I don't see what's so odd about that. The Prince of Wales and the King of Spain have always done it. Czar Alexander used to dine in bed. Napoleon was born in a dining room. It's simply a matter of taste.

GENERAL. Enough! I've heard enough! Stop wrangling and give Olympia a chance.

PRINCESS. Olympia's not herself to-day. She won't even answer her mother's questions.

GENERAL. Why, what's the matter?

OLYMPIA. Nothing, father.

GENERAL. I've brought you good news, too.

ALBERT. I ask you, Lina, was I wrangling?

GENERAL. Lina, don't answer. He's asking himself.

ALBERT. I certainly was not.

GENERAL. You see! He's answered himself. Full stop! Now, if you'll let *me* talk! [*To LINA.*] You've no objections?

LINA. Philip, how can you!

GENERAL. If you'll let *me* talk I think I can raise Olympia's spirits. [*To OLYMPIA.*] I took your letter to the Emperor.

[*Panic from the PRINCESS.*]

OLYMPIA [*low*]. Did you, father dear?

GENERAL. I *read* your letter to the Emperor. I said to his Majesty: "If my dear child writes so of this Captain Kovacs, he is the man Your Majesty's looking for." I said: "My

daughter's as conservative as a diplomat." The Emperor thanked me in the following words: [*They draw their chairs near to listen.*] "I am profoundly touched that your dear daughter should bear her Emperor's problems in her mind even on her holiday. How very sweet of her!" He actually said: "How sweet of her!" [*A glance around.*] That isn't all! [*Chairs even nearer.*] "Your daughter knows how I love little Leonora and to what pains I've gone to find her a riding master." [*He leans back. All lean back.*] That's what he said, Olympia. Perhaps not word for word. I may have got a sentence or so twisted. But not the sense. I'd take my oath on the sense.

PRINCESS [*low, her hand on her heart*]. Oh, dear God!

GENERAL [*to OLYMPIA*]. Well? What do you say?

OLYMPIA [*perfectly cool*]. The Emperor is the first gentleman of Europe.

GENERAL [*disappointed*]. A newspaper might say that. I should think you might think up something a little warmer! You should have heard his voice shake as he spoke the words: "I thank you, Ettingen. I thank you very much." [*Wipes away a tear.*] I'm an old soldier. You know what my Emperor means to me.

PRINCESS. And what you mean to him, my dear.

GENERAL. Yes! In spite of our enemies, he's fond of me. . . . Now I shall interrupt myself for a moment. To thank my dearest daughter . . . [*He rises.*] . . . with all befitting ceremony . . . [*He glances around. All rise.*] . . . that she has given me this rare opportunity to serve my Em-

peror. [*Rhetorically.*] My marvelous child, not only have you proven your filial love, but, more, you have helped your father's interests and strengthened his position. I thank you, my dear child; I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Would not such triple virtue gladden any parent? I think it would. I think so. [*Another tear.*] Now to resume.

[*He sits. All sit.*]

PRINCESS. Don't let your tea get cold.

GENERAL. I shall drink no tea while speaking of my Emperor! [*Pause.*] Or shall I? [*Both OLYMPIA and the PRINCESS nod.*] I shall. [*Does.*] I have. [*Sets down the cup.*] Now, to resume. [*Chairs near again.*] This that I've told you happened yesterday morning. Yesterday afternoon, the Emperor made a further declaration. In his carriage.

LINA. Did you say "In his carriage"?

GENERAL. In his carriage, yes. A little after five. While driving in the Prater. His Majesty spoke most graciously of my family. He always does. [*To LINA.*] I've even known him to speak tolerantly of you. [*Resuming.*] But yesterday . . .

LINA. In his carriage . . .

GENERAL. In his carriage, yes. He quite outdid himself. [*To LINA.*] Why do you keep repeating "in his carriage?"

LINA. Did I repeat it?

GENERAL. Certainly. "In his carriage." I sat beside him yesterday in his carriage.

LINA. I'm sure you did!

GENERAL. Well, then, stop saying it.

LINA. In his . . .

[*She stops herself just in time.*]

GENERAL [*shaking off irritation*]. Suddenly, oh, quite suddenly, after a silence, the Emperor spoke the following words: "Your women, Ettingen," he said, "are not only models of all the female virtues; they are also the wisest women in Austria." What do you think of that? [*To LINA.*] In his carriage.

LINA. Philip, please!

GENERAL. That's what he said. And then a gentle look came on his noble brow.

PRINCESS [*hopefully*]. A gentle look?

GENERAL. I think I'm right in using the word "gentle."

PRINCESS. I hope you're right!

GENERAL. And he concluded with the following. Excuse me while I . . . [*Produces a notebook. Intense excitement and drawing up of chairs.*] This time you shall have it word for word. [*Adjusts his glasses and reads:*] "Ettingen, you are a faithful counselor. I have never regretted taking your advice. You, too, have a faithful counselor. I refer to your lovely and intelligent daughter. Ettingen, if your child has found a man whom she thinks worthy to teach my child to ride, that man has my appointment. For six months I've looked in vain. I've found three good prime ministers for Hungary and four quite good enough for Austria. The proper riding master I have not found. Now that we have the ideal man at last, please tell your daughter that her Emperor is grateful to her." [*Pause. Through his tears he blinks at OLYMPIA.*] Her Emperor is grateful to her. [*Regards the company, frankly wiping his*

eyes.] Forgive my tears. I am an old soldier.

[*General deep emotion. KOVACS appears on the terrace. The GENERAL notices the sudden rigidity of his wife and daughter, and turns.*]

KOVACS. Your Highness, Captain Andras Kovacs, 26th Regiment, Imperial Royal Hussars, reports respectfully.

[*The PRINCESS has risen while he was speaking. Hand to her heart, she goes slowly up stage. OLYMPIA rises now and stands by her place. Facing front.*]

GENERAL [*blowing his nose, adjusting his glasses, putting his notebook away*]. Kovacs, my boy, don't stand on ceremony! Come in and say good-morning! [*Offers his hand which KOVACS takes, bowing deeply. Stunned amazement from the three women.*] I only heard, yesterday, that you knew my women folk.

LINA. We know him. Oh, yes, indeed. We know him well!

KOVACS [*as he kisses the PRINCESS's hand*]. They've been most kind to me. [*Kisses OLYMPIA's hand.*] The day I arrived . . . [*Kisses LINA's hand.*] . . . His Excellency, the French Ambassador, presented me. [*To ALBERT.*] Good morning, Count.

ALBERT [*shaking hands*]. Good morning, Captain. How are you this morning?

GENERAL. The French Ambassador? Why didn't they write me that?

KOVACS. I wasn't of such importance to them, Your Highness.

GENERAL. We know what a waste of paper women's letters are. Two words scrawled to a page and one

can't read them! Sit down, Captain. Sit down.

KOVACS [*to OLYMPIA*]. May I? [*She frowns. He sits in armchair. PRINCESS returns to chair 3. OLYMPIA remains standing behind her father. LINA returns to chair 4 and ALBERT to the armchair. (Molnár is most emphatic about these positions for the byplay, in the scene following, between OLYMPIA and her mother.)*]

GENERAL [*to OLYMPIA*]. We've got news for this young man, haven't we?

KOVACS. News?

GENERAL. Olympia wrote me she'd kept you in the dark. She counted on surprising you. I'll let her do the telling. Isn't that what's expected of me, Olympia?

OLYMPIA [*low*]. Yes, father dear.

GENERAL. How long have you been here?

KOVACS. Two weeks.

GENERAL. That's longer than we had last summer in Karlsbad.

KOVACS. Much.

GENERAL. You vanished, I remember, into thin air.

[*This, too, is a shock to OLYMPIA and the PRINCESS.*]

KOVACS. That's a way I have.

GENERAL. It's a way youth has. Take a good look at this young man, my dears. He saved my life in Karlsbad last summer.

LINA. Oh, he's a rare companion!

GENERAL. He seemed a little shy with me at first. We got to be fast friends, though, didn't we? I hope you've made my womenfolk laugh as much as you made me. I smile at your stories still, when I think of them. It takes a good deal to make

me laugh, you know. [*Back to the PRINCESS and OLYMPIA.*] He's seen the world, this young man has.

KOVACS. One picks up stories travelling.

LINA. Languages, too, it seems.

KOVACS [*acknowledges her remark with a smile*]. I've had time to study *them*. You see, in my life I've had plenty of chance for study. Spending so much time in . . . what I might call retirement. . . . Quite lonely retirement, too.

GENERAL. You're not given to monasteries, I hope?

KOVACS. Well, not exactly monasteries. No.

[*Forced laughter from the PRINCESS as the GENERAL laughs heartily.*]

LINA. Jenny says languages can't be studied.

PRINCESS. I said that?

LINA. Last night, you did. You said languages are a gift.

PRINCESS. Did I? Perhaps I did.

LINA. Just before you went to play cards in there.

[*Indicating the reading room right.*]

GENERAL. Bridge?

KOVACS. I learned bridge travelling. On ocean liners.

GENERAL [*to the PRINCESS*]. Have you played bridge with him?

PRINCESS [*laughing in agony*]. Yes. Oh, yes.

GENERAL. The ocean liner must be a first-rate bridge school. When I remember what he won from me in Karlsbad. . . .

[*OLYMPIA and the PRINCESS breathe deeply.*]

LINA. Jenny's won it back.

PRINCESS. Yes.

GENERAL [*to KOVACS*]. You must have been off your game.

KOVACS. I may have been . . . thinking of something else.

PRINCESS. I had colossal luck.

GENERAL. My Jenny likes to win.

LINA. It's very pleasant, winning. [*To KOVACS*.] Don't you think so, Captain?

KOVACS. It should be. I've known it to be painful, though.

[*A glance at OLYMPIA*.]

GENERAL. Olympia's in a solemn mood. Cheer up, my pet!

OLYMPIA. I'm cheerful, father.

GENERAL [*back to KOVACS*]. How long are you staying?

KOVACS. I leave to-day.

GENERAL. Where for?

KOVACS. I don't know. I only know . . . [*After a glance at OLYMPIA*.] . . . I shan't go south.

LINA. But I thought you were . . .

GENERAL. Why don't you come with us to Venice? [*General horror*.] That's an idea, my boy! I mean it!

KOVACS. Thank you, Your Highness. I thought of Venice once. I've given it up. I shall go north, I think.

LINA. What made you give it up?

GENERAL. Lina, don't pry. There's always a woman in a young man's plans.

KOVACS [*a smile toward LINA*]. I thought I'd hunt a little in East Prussia.

GENERAL. Ah, well! God meant you for a horseman! Now horsemanship made your fortune. Eh, Olympia? [*Claps his hand over his mouth*.] No, I'm not telling! Mum! Never a word!

OLYMPIA [*stroking his hair*]. Dear father!

LINA. He won the first prize yesterday at the Steeplechase.

ALBERT. And rightly.

GENERAL. Was it a good show?

ALBERT. Capital!

GENERAL. I don't suppose you entered. No.

ALBERT [*springing to his feet*]. What? Again!

LINA. You see! I'm not the only one!

GENERAL [*rises and takes KOVACS' hand*]. I'm sorry I didn't see you ride yesterday. But I'm glad to have had this glimpse of you this morning. Above all, I'm glad for your good fortune. [*Claps his hand to his mouth again*.] I didn't say it, Olympia! [*Back to KOVACS*.] I will say, though, you shan't escape me again as you did last time. I shall expect to see you this winter in Vienna. We shall be looking for you at our house.

KOVACS [*an overt glance at the PRINCESS*]. I thank Your Highness. If I'm in Vienna . . .

GENERAL. You will be. You'll be surprised how much you're in Vienna. You're a fine fellow, Kovacs, and I'm fond of you. I shouldn't care to say how fond I am.

KOVACS. I'm very grateful.

GENERAL [*pats his hand, then turns to the PRINCESS*]. Let me see, Jenny. Something we left unsettled. Oh, yes! Was I to reserve a bathing house, or was I not? I can't remember which you decided.

PRINCESS. You are to go at once and reserve one.

GENERAL. Thank you, my love, [*To KOVACS*.] Will you come with me, Kovacs?

KOVACS. I wanted to take leave of the ladies, Your Highness.

GENERAL. To be sure, you did.

OLYMPIA ◆

Albert, then! Forward march! The bathing house must be reserved. Get on with your leave-taking, Kovacs. Make the ladies laugh. They'll have no such companion as you in Venice.

LINA. Now, that's a pity!

PRINCESS. The pity is you can't come with us, Lina.

LINA. I don't know that I couldn't.

PRINCESS. And cut your cure short! I shouldn't hear of it!

LINA. My dear Jenny My cure doesn't matter in the least.

PRINCESS. You told me that your cure lasted another week.

GENERAL [*up stage by column A*]. Halt! [*Takes LINA by the arm.*]

Lina, you may tell *me* about your cure. [*As they start out.*] And you might tell me, too, why you kept repeating "in the carriage."

LINA. Did I repeat it? "In the carriage?"

ALBERT. You most certainly did! "In the carriage! In the carriage!"

LINA. Well, *he* said, "in the carriage." And I suppose, just mechanically, I repeated "in the carriage."

GENERAL. What made you do it?

LINA. "In the carriage?"

GENERAL. Yes. You're doing it now!

LINA. I only said "in the carriage."

GENERAL. I heard you say it, I thought, with that ironic barb of yours.

LINA. Oh, no, Philip!

GENERAL. Ironic Lina! "In the carriage. In the—"

[*The foregoing has taken them across the terrace and out of sight down the steps, ALBERT following. Only certain words have stood out. In the meanwhile, the three remaining in the salon have stood frozen,*

KOVACS *beside his chair, OLYMPIA by the breakfast table, the PRINCESS up stage left. Now the PRINCESS comes quickly down toward KOVACS.*]

PRINCESS. What does this mean?

KOVACS. What does what mean, Princess?

PRINCESS. All this. Between my husband and you. What are you up to this time?

KOVACS. Nothing remarkable.

PRINCESS. You're still here, aren't you? You haven't gone away and broken your legs? You've wormed yourself into my husband's confidence!

KOVACS. I must have told you your husband and I were friends at Karlsbad.

PRINCESS. Where you played cards with him! [*Turning to OLYMPIA.*] Perhaps *you* can explain?

OLYMPIA [*coldly*]. If honor among thieves meant what it means among honest men, he would have kept his bargain and gone this morning.

KOVACS. I couldn't go. I hadn't finished here.

OLYMPIA. God, are you trying to kill me? Because, if you are, I may as well save you the trouble and . . .

KOVACS. I couldn't go until I'd broken an odd and disagreeable bit of news to your illustrious mother. [*To the PRINCESS.*] Princess, I am neither Meyrowski nor a criminal.

PRINCESS. Who are you?

KOVACS. Andras Kovacs. Captain in the 26th Regiment, Imperial Royal Hussars. Meyrowski the swindler does not exist. He was no more than an invention of mine. I am a swindler only in swindling you with that invention. Logically that may make

a swindler of me. However . . .

OLYMPIA [*reeling with her mother*]. I don't believe you.

KOVACS. You will before I go.

PRINCESS. If you think you can take me in again?— I'm not such a fool.

KOVACS. Meyrowski was a joke, Your Highness. [*To OLYMPIA.*] A peasant's joke. A joke I played to punish you for wounding me. You hurt my peasant's pride, you see. Almost my peasant's honor. When I walked out of here to drink strong drinks and love beautiful women, at your suggestion, I made up my peasant's mind to . . .

OLYMPIA. To do what?

KOVACS [*controlling himself, proceeds with his story*]. I went to the telephone. In that café up the street. I called up the police. I told them I was headquarters in Vienna. They swallowed it so easily. Meyrowski was born there, in that telephone booth. That's all. [*Pauses. Looks from her.*] You know the rest.

OLYMPIA. You lie!

KOVACS. I do not lie. I usually save such jokes for the first of April. Practical jokes. Telephone jokes. Peasants' jokes in the worst of taste. . . . After I got the Colonel, I came back here to the hotel and waited in the bar, drinking strong drinks, to see what would happen. We all saw what did happen.

PRINCESS. What made you do it? What on earth made you do it?

KOVACS. I tell you, to punish the pair of you! Knowing you felt toward peasants as you do, I thought: how will they take a criminal? I guessed the criminal could make you come to heel. Only the peasant has no power . . . yet.

PRINCESS. That idiot of a Colonel!

KOVACS. Don't blame him. There isn't a policeman anywhere in the world who wouldn't have walked into that trap.

PRINCESS. Now and forever I order you to . . .

[*The GENERAL has returned and interrupts her.*]

GENERAL. Jenny, she swears she meant nothing by it.

PRINCESS. Who? By what?

GENERAL. Lina. By the way she kept repeating "in the carriage" after me.

PRINCESS. What carriage?

GENERAL. I didn't come back to go over it again. I came to tell you not to wait. They did have a bath-house for me. I shall bathe now. Where can I meet you in an hour?

PRINCESS. Wherever you like.

GENERAL. No. You must say, my love.

PRINCESS. We might walk down to the Casino. You could join us there.

GENERAL. At the Casino. In an hour. Good. [*To OLYMPIA.*] Have you told him yet?

OLYMPIA. No. Not yet.

GENERAL. Don't torture the boy! You know what your mother's always saying? Man is a noble animal. Kill him, but never torture him.

PRINCESS [*uncomfortable*]. What was all that "in the carriage" business?

GENERAL. Let's drop it. You know Lina.

PRINCESS. Is she still talking?

GENERAL. What if she is? [*To KOVACS.*] Do I get a chance to get back at you at bridge? This afternoon? While you're still off your

game. [*To the PRINCESS.*] His father had the genius for cards.

OLYMPIA [*now completely bewildered*]. His father!

GENERAL. I didn't expect it to come out in the youngster. You were a serious young officer, Kovacs.

KOVACS. I neglected to tell their Highnesses what old friends we are.

GENERAL. That's the family modesty. I taught this boy to be a soldier, Jenny. I can't say he made a very brilliant pupil. Still, I was fond of him. For his father's sake. [*The PRINCESS mouths the words "his father" to OLYMPIA.*] Where is your father, now?

KOVACS. At home, on the estate. Gone back to being . . . a peasant. . . .

[*A look at OLYMPIA.*]

GENERAL. Good for him! Keeps his health, I hope?

KOVACS. The best of health, thank God.

GENERAL. Give him my love, next time you write him. [*KREHL appears on the terrace with his usual formality.*] Hello, what's all this?

KREHL [*as always, bowing and saluting*]. Colonel Johann Wolfgang Krehl, Your Highness, Commanding the Imperial Royal Gendarmerie of the district.

GENERAL. Nice of you to report. What can I do for you?

[*KREHL, completely confused, glances from the PRINCESS to KOVACS and back to the PRINCESS again.*]

PRINCESS. Why do you look at me? What can I do?

KREHL. Well, Your Highness, I. . . .

PRINCESS. Well?

[*The look she gives him silences him.*]

KREHL [*recovering himself*]. I thought I might be permitted to thank the General.

PRINCESS [*so lightly and so quickly*]. Of course! Of course! Of course! Of course! Philip, the Colonel has a charming son. Brave, handsome, talented and aged fourteen. He wants to be a general.

GENERAL. Bravo!

PRINCESS. Not all at once, you know. In time. I've promised the boy your patronage. The Colonel has taken particular care of Olympia and me.

GENERAL. His son shall be a general! [*To KREHL.*] You've got yourself powerful friends in my wife and daughter, Colonel. [*KREHL salutes.*] Bring your son to see me in Vienna. September first. [*KREHL salutes.*] And thanks for your attentions to the ladies. [*KREHL salutes.*] Although they usually look after themselves pretty well. Has there been something special?

PRINCESS. Don't let your mouth hang open, Colonel! [*To GENERAL.*] I'm trying to break the Colonel of that habit.

KOVACS. I called him on the telephone, I said it was Vienna speaking. I told him to keep close watch on a certain Captain Kovacs, not a hussar at all but a notorious swindler.

GENERAL. You didn't! And did he watch you?

KOVACS. For a while. And then he went to bed. [*To the PRINCESS, KREHL's mouth hanging open again.*] Your Highness is quite right. He must be cured of that bad habit.

GENERAL [*his hand on KREHL's shoulder*]. We have the best gen-

darmerie in Europe. I shall be happy, Colonel, to help your boy.

[KREHL *salutes and is going.*]

KOVACS. At your service, Colonel.

KREHL [*in a rage*]. At yours.

KOVACS. He kept his mouth shut that time. I think he's learning.

GENERAL [*to the PRINCESS*]. I think you frighten him. So then. At the Casino. In an hour.

GENERAL [*as KOVACS snaps to attention*]. Now, now, at ease my boy! [*To the ladies, patting his shoulder.*] Capital fellow, this! Don't you think? Had himself watched did he?

[*Exit GENERAL.*]

PRINCESS [*a pause, then*]. You're an assassin, that's what you are. Knifing us in the back. . . .

KOVACS. A knife thrust in the back, Your Highness, would not invariably mean assassination.

PRINCESS. So? What else?

KOVACS. It might be surgery!

PRINCESS. You cut a more contemptible figure now than you did last night. I nearly told my husband everything. [*Her eyes on OLYMPIA.*] Everything I *know*, at least. If I'd done that, you would have been obliged to blow your brains out.

KOVACS. Yes. I suppose I should.

PRINCESS. Even now I've half a mind to—

OLYMPIA [*a little scream*]. No, mother!

PRINCESS. Aha! At last your mother's question's answered!

[*Goes out quickly.*]

OLYMPIA [*furious*]. You. . . .

KOVACS. No! Stop! I shan't let you go on until you've told me which me you're talking to! Which is it? Kovacs or Meyrowski?

OLYMPIA. What difference does it make?

KOVACS. The greatest. They *must* be kept apart. Happy Meyrowski never existed. You disposed of the poor Captain, yourself, last night.

OLYMPIA. I'm talking to the man who won my confidence with a lie.

KOVACS. Do you call what I won, your confidence?

OLYMPIA. The man who took vile advantage of me, then! What difference do these phrases make? It's the lie that matters!

KOVACS. Go on.

OLYMPIA. Not only are you contemptible and worthless, but . . .

KOVACS. Contemptible and worthless.

OLYMPIA. You won't let me finish what I've got to say!

KOVACS. What difference can it make?

[*Pause.*]

OLYMPIA. You don't seem to want us to be ourselves with each other.

KOVACS. No. There's nothing more to gain by that.

OLYMPIA. You're unhappy, aren't you?

KOVACS. No.

OLYMPIA. Happy?

KOVACS. In a way. I've taught a great lady to respect democracy. That's something.

OLYMPIA. Is your happiness then wholly social and political?

KOVACS. Wholly.

OLYMPIA. You're lying.

KOVACS. That's quite possible.

[*Pause.*]

OLYMPIA. Well, what next?

KOVACS. I go away.

OLYMPIA. Where to?

KOVACS. I don't know. Wherever I go, I shall keep Meyrowski's promise and never wear this . . . this fancy dress again . . . [OLYMPIA

looks at him in horror.] I'm quite serious. I played a game. I had to stake my dignity to win. Doing that, I disgraced my uniform. I'm neither a fool nor a sentimentalist. But . . . [*His hand on his breast.*] . . . either a man respects his uniform or he doesn't. And, if he fails to respect it, he takes it off. One has to pay for every joke. Some other hussar can teach the Archduchess how to ride.

[*Pause.*]

OLYMPIA. Do you mind if I ask you an unusual—a very leading question?

KOVACS. Please!

OLYMPIA. Do you love me?

KOVACS. Yes.

OLYMPIA. Thank you.

KOVACS. Not at all.

OLYMPIA [*hanging her head*]. What have you done to me?

KOVACS. You insulted me and I avenged myself. I owed that vengeance to myself and to every peasant in this world.

OLYMPIA [*repeating tonelessly*]. What have you done to me?

KOVACS. I've punished you.

OLYMPIA. Was that punishment?

KOVACS. Yes.

OLYMPIA. But I love you, my dear . . . dear brigand.

[*KOVACS turns rigid. The struggle within him is evident for a moment. Then he controls himself.*]

KOVACS. Will you permit me, Princess, to leave you now?

OLYMPIA. You're *not* going?

KOVACS. Yes.

OLYMPIA. When shall I see you again? Where shall I see you? This autumn? In Vienna?

KOVACS. Never, my very dear. Never and nowhere.

[*He salutes and goes. OLYMPIA stands motionless, her eyes closed.*]

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